



**Cooperation between Stakeholders
and Policymakers in the
Implementation of the SDGs: Overview
of activities and practices in Europe**

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Introduction

The topic of this European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Quarterly Report is cooperation between stakeholders and policymakers in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides an overview of cooperation mechanisms and practices in Europe and looks at the EU, the national level, and at stakeholder activities.

This topic is also related to the theme of the ESDN Conference 2018, which focused on stakeholder-policy cooperation in the age of the SDGs. The findings from the Annual Conference, which brought together 120 stakeholders and policymakers from 27 countries for 1.5 days of exchange and learning, can be found in the conclusions section of this Report.

However, before addressing cooperation between stakeholders and policymakers in the implementation of the SDGs and whether the SDGs have changed the nature of cooperation, a look into past experiences of cooperation between stakeholders and policymakers with respect to sustainable development is needed to form a basis of measure for how the SDGs have potentially changed this cooperation overall.

Chapter 1 of this Report, therefore, seeks to define what the ESDN sees as stakeholder-policy cooperation and does so by looking into how cooperation between stakeholders and policymakers was before the SDGs came into being. The chapter also looks into why the cooperation between stakeholders and policymakers is important, as well as the role that the key principles of participation play in any cooperative process. The chapter then concludes with the benefits and challenges of stakeholder participation and cooperation in the policy-making process.

After having established a background on stakeholder-policy cooperation and stakeholder participation in the policy-making process, Chapter 2 focuses on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how its implementation, along with the implementation of the 17 SDGs have potentially changed the way in which stakeholders and policymakers cooperate.

Chapter 3 further breaks down this concept to the European level in order to see how stakeholder-policy cooperation functions with respect to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The European Union institutions that will be looked into in more detail are the European Commission (EC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

Similarly, Chapter 4 looks at the stakeholder-policy cooperation and participation at the European country level, which describes, in tables, the methods that countries are utilizing to engage stakeholders in the cooperative and participative processes required to make cooperation effective and allow for the best chances of success in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. 22 European countries, and their stakeholder-policy cooperation methods, are shared.

Chapter 5 then looks into stakeholder driven initiatives and actions regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. For the purpose of this Report, the stakeholders included are those that had presented their organizations and their organization's work in implementing the SDGs at the ESDN Annual Conference. The input given by these stakeholder organizations at the Annual Conference were important for interactive sessions that lead to the results discussed in the conclusions section of this Report.

Chapter 1: Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation before the SDGs

Before being able to discuss stakeholder-policy cooperation in a meaningful way, the concept must first be defined. For the purpose of the Quarterly Report, the ESDN treats stakeholder-policy cooperation very similarly to stakeholder participation, as the participation of stakeholders in the policy-making process is essential in the overall all success of cooperative endeavours.

Defining Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation

In brief, 'stakeholder participation' and 'stakeholder-policy cooperation' refer to the inclusion of various stakeholders that can affect, or are affected by, the results of policy-making and decision-making processes in collaborative activities and exchange mechanisms with policymakers (i.e. representatives of national and sub-national government ministries). In general, a number of institutions and actors are invited to participate or collaborate in such processes, for instance, civil society organisations/NGOs, business representatives, social partners (i.e. trade unions, chambers of commerce, etc.), sub-national authorities, academia, and individual citizens. The type of cooperation constellations and who is able to join the cooperative process depends on the context and the level of government. At the supra-national level, it would make less sense to invite individual citizens, but rather focus on including more organized stakeholder groups that represent individual citizens. As the level at which cooperation is being done becomes smaller, i.e. regional, national, sub-nation, and local, then a different constellation of stakeholders in cooperative processes might change.

The inclusion of different stakeholders in decision-making processes has been a central principle of sustainable development since the concept emerged. Middlemiss (2014) found that both theory and practice of sustainable development have historically emphasised stakeholder inclusion as an important means to achieve its ends (see also Hardin 1968, WCED 1987, Ostrom 1990). The inclusion of stakeholders in policy-making and decision-making processes for sustainable development has been encouraged because of the assumption that people are more likely to commit to policy outcomes to which they have had an input (Middlemiss, 2014).¹

Morse and Bell (2010) describe two main arguments behind this rationale:

1. That stakeholders have a fundamental right to be included in deliberations that will have an impact upon their lives; and
2. That listening to the voice of stakeholders and including them within a process of change can help make that change better.²

A very valuable way to see stakeholder participation rationales is proposed by Wesselink et al. (2011):

1. Instrumental: Effective participation ***makes decisions more legitimate and improves results***. It aims to increase public credibility, diffuse conflicts, justify decisions, and limit future challenges to implementation by 'creating ownership'.
2. Substantive: It aims to ***increase the breadth and depth of information and thereby improve the quality of decisions***.

¹ Middlemiss, L. (2014) Individualised or participatory? Exploring late-modern identity and sustainable development, *Environmental Politics*, 23:6, p. 929-946.

² Morse, S. and S. Bell (2010) Stakeholder participation in sustainable development. Available at: <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/156236/>.

3. Normative: It aims to counter the power of incumbent interests and allows *those who are affected by a decision to have influence*.³

Key Principles of Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation Processes

Several **key principles** describe the characteristics and reasoning for stakeholder participation and cooperation processes in more detail (see for instance: Arbter et al. 2007⁴; Duraiappah et al., 2005⁵; Egger and Majeres, 1992⁶; Hemmati, 2002⁷). These key principles will be used later in Chapter 4 when looking at the different degrees and types of stakeholder participation and cooperation in different European countries.

- **Inclusion:** representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved;
- **Equal Partnership:** it should be recognised that every stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status;
- **Increasing knowledge:** stakeholders possess different kinds of 'knowledge' (e.g. expert, regional/local or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues;
- **Transparency:** all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue;
- **Access to information:** all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process;
- **Ownership:** Involving stakeholders in policy cooperation processes can increase their 'ownership' of the outcomes of the process;
- **Sharing responsibility:** each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process;
- **Empowerment:** it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results;
- **Process design:** the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.);
- **Integrating in existing decision procedures:** Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process.

The process principles outlined above can have different **application practices in the policy process:**

- **Policy hierarchy level:** Participatory and cooperation mechanisms can be applied at different levels of policy hierarchies, i.e. in the development and/or implementation of policies, strategies, overall concepts, etc.; in the development/implementation of plans and

³ Wesselink, A., J. Paavola, O. Fritsch and O. Renn (2011) Rationales for public participation in environmental policy and governance: practitioners' perspectives Environment and Planning A 43, p. 2688-2704.

⁴ Arbter, K., M. Handler E. Purker, G. Tappeiner and R. Trattnigg (2007) The Public Participation Manual: Shaping the Future Together. Vienna: Austrian Ministry of Environment & ÖGUT. Available at: http://www.partizipation.at/fileadmin/media_data/Downloads/Publikationen/participationmanual_en.pdf.

⁵ Duraiappah, A.K., P. Roddy and J.-E. Parry (2005) Have participatory approaches increased capabilities? Winnipeg: IISD. Available at: http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/economics_participatory_approaches.pdf.

⁶ Egger, P. and Majeres, J. (1992) Local Resource Management and Development: Strategic Dimensions of People's Participation, in Ghai, D. and Vivian, J.M. (eds.), Grassroots Environmental Action: People's Participation in Sustainable Development. London: Routledge.

⁷ Hemmati, M. (2002) Multi-stakeholder processes for governance and sustainability: beyond deadlock and conflict. London: Earthscan. http://www.minuhemmati.net/eng/mssp/mssp_book.htm

programmes that define objectives and targets in specific policy fields; and in projects that have a clearly defined scope and specific running time.⁸

- **Different scopes for participation and cooperation:** Depending on the scope and objective of participation and cooperation, there are different forms of participation processes: Ad-hoc forms that are organised once for a specific purpose or single policy; Institutionalised forms (such as dialogues, partnerships, councils, committees, advisory groups, etc.) that occur on a regularized basis; and ‘hybrid forms’ are, for instance, councils or committees (e.g. national SD councils) supported by ad-hoc participation (e.g. forums, workshops and conferences addressing specific topics of SD).⁹
- **Degree of participation or cooperation:** One can also distinguish participation mechanisms regarding the extent to which stakeholders are involved. For instance, Green and Hunton-Clarke (2003) distinguish between informative, consultative, and decisional participation: Informative participation describes processes that involve information that is being passed from one body to another; consultative participation where the stakeholders are asked to contribute their views, knowledge and experiences at various stages of the policy process; decisional participation describes mechanisms in which stakeholders participate in the decision-making process. This includes participation in actual political decision-making or in the preparation of political decisions. Examples are some national SD councils, sectoral policy dialogues, decisions on indicator sets, etc.¹⁰
- **Vertical participation or cooperation:** Participation takes place at different political levels, i.e. on the supra-national (EU), national, regional and/or local level. Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) argue that in participatory processes at the supra-national and/or nation level, participation or cooperation is often restricted to traditional stakeholder groups and ‘classic’ participatory mechanisms. In contrast, participation on the sub-national levels is often more interactive and innovative.¹¹
- **Breadth of participation or cooperation:** This refers to the number of stakeholders involved in a participatory mechanism, i.e. how diverse and cross-boundary (e.g. cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary, etc.) the set of involved stakeholders is. Based on Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002), one can distinguish between: full participation (all major sectors of society are involved); restricted participation (only some sectors of society are involved); and strongly restricted participation (only a selected few sectors of society are involved).¹²
- **Participation or cooperation at different stages of the policy cycle:** This characteristic refers to the three common stages of the policy cycle, i.e. participation in the design, implementation, and review of policies, strategies, programmes etc.¹³

⁸ Pisano, U., Lange, L, Lepuschitz, K., and Berger, G. “The role of stakeholder participation in European sustainable development policies and strategies”. ESDN Quarterly Report 39. p. 8.

⁹ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁰ Green, A.O. and Hunton-Clarke, L. (2003) A typology of stakeholder participation for company environmental decision-making, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 12, p.292-299.

¹¹ Dalal-Clayton, B. and Bass, S. (eds.) (2002) *Sustainable development strategies: A resource book*. London: OECD, UNDP, Earthscan. http://www.nssd.net/pdf/resource_book/SDStrat-06.pdf.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Pisano, U., Lange, L, Lepuschitz, K., and Berger, G. p. 10.

Benefits and Challenges of Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation and Participation

Benefits

Participatory or cooperation processes can produce a number of benefits for the different stakeholders involved. Generally, these processes bring together people with different interests, views and ideas, who might have otherwise not cooperated. As they express their various perspectives, needs and experiences, a **common pool of knowledge** about the different aspects of a policy, strategy, plan, programme or project is developed. The subsequent political decision process can then take this knowledge and the gathered ideas into account. The benefits of participation or collaboration processes differs regarding the involved stakeholders (Arbter et al, 2007):

- **Politicians** may acquire a clearer picture of the needs of different stakeholder groups. Participatory or cooperation processes can render it easier to accommodate conflicting interests and promote the culture of collaboration and dialogue.
- **Public administrators** can benefit from stakeholder participation because issues have been discussed and worked out in cooperation with stakeholders. Therefore, administrators are less likely to be confronted with objections and subsequent complaints in the policy or strategy process. Moreover, participation or cooperation may play an important part in increasing stakeholders' trust in the administration.
- **Stakeholders** may benefit from bringing in their perspectives in the participatory process and, thereby, influencing the development of policies and strategies. Moreover, they are informed about future developments earlier and this may influence their own strategy and future activities.¹⁴

Challenges

Although there are many benefits of participatory or cooperation processes, practical experiences show and research (Steurer, 2007) reveals that establishing meaningful and effective exchange mechanisms between different stakeholders remains a challenge.¹⁵ Some of the **limits and costs of participatory or cooperation processes** and how they could be addressed are listed below.

- **Creation of unrealistic expectations:** To avoid this, the purpose and form of participation or cooperation should be openly communicated in advance and it should be made clear that compromises are necessary in a process where conflicting opinions and interests meet.
- **Topics are too technical:** This is a risk stemming from omissions in the planning of participation or cooperation processes. Evidently, special care needs to be taken to 'translate' a given problem into general language and to provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- **Costs of resources, time and money:** Transaction costs of developing and maintaining institutional mechanisms for participation and cooperation, conflict resolution, time spent in meetings, etc., need to be taken into account.

¹⁴ Arbter, K., M. Handler E. Purker, G. Tappeiner and R. Trattnigg (2007). The Public Participation Manual: Shaping the Future Together. Vienna: Austrian Ministry of Environment & ÖGUT. Available at: http://www.partizipation.at/fileadmin/media_data/Downloads/Publikationen/participationmanual_en.pdf.

¹⁵ Steurer, R. (2007) From Government Strategies to Strategic Public Management: An Exploratory Outlook on the Pursuit of Cross-Sectoral Policy Integration. European Environment, 17, p. 201-214.

- **Stakeholder selection and legitimisation of stakeholder groups:** This is one of the most sensitive elements of a participatory or cooperation process. An open, transparent and profound stakeholder selection is necessary for successful outcomes.
- **Takeover of the process by dominant participants:** Careful design participation or cooperation processes should ensure the processes are balanced, that all sides of the debate are heard.
- **Report on the outcomes of processes:** Transparent and open participation or cooperation should also include a report about how the results of the process have been used and an explanation when results were not used. This will potentially increase efforts and costs, however, will contribute to the traceability of outcomes and trust of stakeholders involved;
- **Pre-existence of prescribed management goals or targets:** Pre-set targets are clearly incompatible with granting stakeholder control over objective-setting and decision-making.¹⁶

Past Experiences in Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation

Agenda 21 (1992) and Rio+20 (2012)

Stakeholder participation and stakeholder-policy cooperation have been central components of various policy documents. Since the adoption of Agenda 21 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, this collaborative imperative has gained ground in environmental policy practice, and is now translated into frameworks for ‘stakeholder’ participation or cooperation across multiple environmental areas and green policy instruments.¹⁷ For instance, Agenda 21 put great emphasis on local community participation as a means of implementation by affirming that governments at the appropriate level should, among others, select combinations of land uses and production systems appropriate to land units through multiple goal optimization procedures, and strengthen delivery systems and local community participation (paragraph 14.40, UNCED, 1992). In 2012, the Rio+20 Outcome Document, ‘The Future We Want’, stresses its aim to ‘enhance the participation and effective engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the relevant international forums and, in this regard, promote transparency and broad public participation and partnerships to implement sustainable development’ (UN, 2012). Participatory and cooperation arrangements with different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, business, and academia in the policy-making process are thus a central steering tool for the overall governance of sustainable development.

As can be seen, the participation of and cooperation with stakeholders is not a new concept, but one that has been seeing increasing relevance since Agenda 21. The inclusion and participation of stakeholders in the policy-making process has many benefits to the overall robustness of policies made through the use of such processes and is a necessary ingredient for stakeholder-policy cooperation mechanisms.

While policymakers have been realizing the important insights and added value that stakeholders can bring to the policy-making process over the past decades, the world of sustainable development changes rapidly. Instead of Agenda 21, policymakers are now being faced with the most comprehensive, inclusive, and overarching global agenda that has ever been ratified by the UN. The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** puts new pressures on all governments and all policymakers from all ministries, as **the very nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs requires all actors to become involved, including stakeholders**. As the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs represents a call to action for everyone, it is interesting to see in which ways the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs has

¹⁶ Umberto Pisano, Lisa K. Lange, Katrin Lepuschitz and Gerald Berger. p. 10-11.

¹⁷ Kuchler, M. and E. Lövbrand (2015) Simulative governance: on the collaborative narrative of civil society participation in the CDM stakeholder framework, Environmental Politics. p. 2.

changed how different stakeholder groups cooperate with one another, especially policymakers and stakeholders, in light of the Agenda and the goals it hopes to reach by 2030.

Chapter 2: Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in the Age of the SDGs

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on Stakeholder Participation

Much like Agenda 21 from 1992, the **2030 Agenda** also makes many mentions of the **role that stakeholders have** in the attainment of the SDGs by 2030, as it was recognized that not only policymakers and governments have a responsibility to sustainable development and the SDGs, but all facets of society, stakeholders included. The 2030 Agenda seeks to outline this, but, at the same time, focus on the idea of **collaborative partnerships** being formed between stakeholders, governments, policymakers, etc., in an effort **to make better, more informed decisions** on how to advance the Agenda and the SDGs and give them the best possible chance of success.

Already in the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda there is a strong statement and call to all stakeholders regarding the important part they have to play in the implementation of the Agenda:

“All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.”¹⁸ [Emphasis by the author]

Within the body text of the 2030 Agenda, there are many paragraphs that are devoted towards detailing the necessity stakeholder being involved in the entire 2030 Agenda implementation process and the necessity that stakeholders also contribute towards the realization of the SDGs. The drafting of the 2030 Agenda was conducted over many years of consultations with stakeholders, which shows how serious and important stakeholder engagement has been in the entire 2030 Agenda process and focuses heavily on the formation of partnerships, even going so far as to making partnerships one of the 17 SDGs (SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development).

“§6 The Goals and targets are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable. This consultation included valuable work done by the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals and by the United Nations, whose Secretary-General provided a synthesis report in December 2014.”

“§39 The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure its implementation. We fully commit to this. This Partnership will work in a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in vulnerable situations. It will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources.”¹⁹

Some of the more specific subgoals of SDG 17 directly address stakeholders and the importance they play in forging global partnerships for sustainable development:

¹⁸ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations, A/RES/70/1, 2015. p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 3.

17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships²⁰

The 2030 Agenda does not only decree that stakeholders should be involved in partnerships and in the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, but that stakeholders should also be involved in the review processes at the national and subnational levels, as stakeholders offer unique insights and perspectives onto progress being made and where progress has yet to still be made. Stakeholder involvement should happen not only within countries, but also in their reporting to the UN and the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

“§79 We also encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.”²¹

“§84 The high-level political forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall carry out regular reviews, in line with General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013. Reviews will be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. They shall be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants. They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.”²²

“§85 Thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, will also take place at the high-level political forum. These will be supported by reviews by the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums which should reflect the integrated nature of the Goals as well as the interlinkages between them. They will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into, and be aligned with, the cycle of the high-level political forum.”²³

“§89 The high-level political forum will support participation in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290. We call upon those actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda.”²⁴

Many passages of the 2030 Agenda describe how vital it is for countries, national and subnational governments, and stakeholders to work together in forming partnerships and collaborative processes that foster such partnerships in order to better implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 27.

²¹ Ibid. p. 32.

²² Ibid. p. 33.

²³ Ibid. p. 33-34.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 34.

Chapter 3: Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in SDG Implementation at the EU Level

European Commission

Multi-Stakeholder Platform on SDGs: Purpose, Functionality, and SDG Implementation Activities

Implementing the 17 SDGs can only be achieved with a strong involvement of all stakeholders. The high-level multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs brings together stakeholders from civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the private and corporate sector in regular meetings to support and advise the European Commission on the implementation of the SDGs at the EU level.

The [Multi-Stakeholder Platform on SDGs](#) was set up on 22 May 2017 to:

1. Support and advise the European Commission and all stakeholders involved on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level;
2. Support and advise the European Commission in relation to Commission events on sustainable development;
3. Help to prepare the selection process of an annual sustainability award; and
4. Provide a forum for exchange of experience and best practice on the implementation of the SDGs across sectors and at local, regional, national and EU level.

Platform members are either individuals appointed in a personal capacity or to represent a common interest or organizations. The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions each hold one seat in the Platform.

With the exception of representatives of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the Secretary-General of the Commission appointed the members of the platform and management committee from applicants who had responded to the call for applications.

The Platform is chaired by First Vice-President Timmermans and is composed of a total of 30 members.

To assist the work of the platform, a management committee has been set up as sub-group of the platform. The management committee is chaired by the Secretariat-General of the Commission.²⁵

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Representing Stakeholders in EU Policy-Making

The EESC is a consultative body that gives representatives of Europe's socio-occupational interest groups and others a formal platform to express their points of view on EU issues. Its opinions are addressed to the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. It thus has a key role to play in the Union's decision-making process. The EESC has 350 members, who are drawn from economic and social interest groups in Europe from each EU Member State. Members are nominated by national governments and appointed by the Council of the European Union for a renewable 5-year

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs/role-structure-and-working-methods_en.

term of office. They belong to one of three groups: Employers, Workers or Diversity Europe, the latter representing a variety of NGOs, farmers, consumers, youth, and disability representatives.

Within the Committee, the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) works to advance the debate on all aspects of sustainability and have made the implementation of the 2030 Agenda their highest priority. Indeed, in light of the 2030 Agenda, promoting sustainable development across all policy areas is a cross-cutting priority of the SDO. Over the past 3 years the 2030 Agenda has been the overarching objective of the current mandate, with the ambition of creating a European Sustainable Development Forum and continuous advocacy in favor of the transition towards a genuinely sustainable Europe, with notably the concept of "just transition" at its core. The SDO has been facilitating civil society dialogue on the SDGs with a series of conferences and workshops, organised in conjunction with civil society partners, other European Institutions, UN bodies and others. Recent developments in this regard have led to the EC creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform where the EESC is playing an active role.

Activities that relate directly to the implementation of the SDGs:

1. The 2015 EESC report, *Building the Europe We Want - Models for civil society involvement in the implementation of the Post-2015 agenda at the EU level*, highlights a necessity for the EESC to develop its capacity to respond to the messages from statistical reports on SDGs. It suggests that monitoring the progress on the SDGs should be an area in which the EESC and organized civil society partners take action on. The EESC is therefore developing a study to address this issue, calling for a process and methodology to better integrate civil society views in the choice and type of indicators for monitoring the SDGs in the EU.
2. The 2018 EESC own-initiative opinion (*Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs – the civil society contribution, foreseen adoption: 19-20 September 2018*) will call for ideas on how organized civil society ought to be better involved in the types of indicators and monitoring of the SDGs. The opinion will feed into the Commission's 2018 Reflection Paper *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*, specifically to the work of the subgroup 'Monitoring, Assessing and Reporting Progress on SDGs' of the Commission 's Multi-stakeholder Platform for the implementation of the SDGs.
3. SDG 12: European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) platform was set up to facilitate stakeholder involvement and accelerate the transition from a linear "take, make and waste" economic model to a circular economy in Europe. Its creation was announced in March 2017 at a two-day event hosted jointly by the EC and the EESC, who have since been keeping the Platform operational. Based on stakeholder input, the platform's tasks are to:
 - i) advance the circular economy in the Member States, regional and local governments, civil society and businesses;
 - ii) strengthen cooperation among stakeholder networks to facilitate the exchange of good practice; and
 - iii) contribute to identifying the social, economic and cultural barriers to the development of a circular economy in Europe.
4. SDGs 13, 17: Each year the EESC participates in the UN Climate Change Conference, known as the COP, or Conference of the Parties, by hosting official Side Events and participating in the myriad of political climate discussions and meetings. The EESC is committed to promoting the voice of the civil society in this process by actively calling for an enabling framework accelerating and supporting more non-state climate action. The EESC has launched a call for the European Dialogue on Non-State-Climate Action to strengthen and increase the scope and

scale of European-based non-state climate action. Moreover, in 2016 four European organizations (EESC, CoR, OECD and Comité21) decided to join forces to co-pilot an international coalition on multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance in favor of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Their goal: to use their networks and expertise with civil society, governments, regions and municipalities to propose a strategy for multiplying the many initiatives already being undertaken by non-state and sub-national actors.

Chapter 4: Overview of Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in Different European Countries

This chapter looks into how the national level is **engaging stakeholders** and how stakeholders are being involved in cooperative processes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In order to gauge what the national level has been doing regarding the governance in their cooperative processes with stakeholders, a questionnaire was prepared by the ESDN Office and sent to national level representatives from Belgium, Estonia, Finland, and Italy.

The questions of the survey focused on the main principles of participation and cooperation that were mentioned in chapter 1 and are provided again below. The survey questions ask how and what mechanisms are in place at the national level to ensure that stakeholder voices and viewpoints are being taken into account, as well as the national level's future plans regarding further stakeholder engagement and participation.

- **Inclusion:** citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved;
- **Equal Partnership:** it should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status;
- **Increasing knowledge:** stakeholders possess different kinds of 'knowledge' (e.g. expert, regional/local or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues;
- **Transparency:** all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue;
- **Access to information:** all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process;
- **Ownership:** Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their 'ownership' of the outcomes of participation;
- **Sharing responsibility:** each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process;
- **Empowerment:** it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results;
- **Process design:** the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.);
- **Integrating in existing decision procedures:** Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process.

In addition to sending out a questionnaire, some background information and history of stakeholder-policy cooperation was highlighted, in order to provide more insight into each presenting country.

Belgium

Belgium has a long history of involving stakeholders in the policy-making process. The Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD) is a prime example of how stakeholders have been engaged in the policy-making process, as the Council, in one form or another, has been in existence since 1993. Some of the main foci of the Council are the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and provides opinions, which come from stakeholders that are members of the Council, to government.

The Federal Council for Sustainable Development advises the Belgian federal government on federal policy on sustainable development. Particular attention is paid to fulfilling Belgium's international commitments, such as Agenda 21, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. These commitments stem from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The FRDO was set up in 1997 as the successor to the National Council for Sustainable Development (NRDO) which had been in operation since 1993. The Council was set up under the law of 5 May 1997, which deals with the coordination of federal policy on sustainable development.

The tasks of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development are:

- To advise the government on all measures concerning federal policy on sustainable development and to take part in policy dialogue with members of the government;
- To serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas on sustainable development. This includes the organization of dialogues with stakeholders in preparation for the drafting of opinions within the statutory bodies, working groups and forums.
- To provide information and raise awareness about sustainable development among citizens, individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of study days, the sustainable development press award, and publications; and
- To conduct research in all areas relating to sustainable development.

The members of the Council are representatives of various social groups: environmental organizations, organization for development cooperation, users', employees' and employers' bodies, youth organizations and the scientific world. Representatives of the federal government, the language communities and the regions, and environmental councils and economic and social councils are non-voting members.²⁶ An example of the types of opinions the Council provides to the government, specifically those regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, are "[Opinion on the Implementation of SDGs](#)" and "[Opinion on the Belgian report for the Voluntary National Review 2017](#)".

The Council's working groups carry out preliminary work on the preparation of the FRDO-CFDD's opinions. They also serve as a forum: they organize conferences to promote discussion on sustainable development. The following working groups are currently active within the FRDO-CFDD:

- Strategies for sustainable development
- Energy and climate
- International relations
- Product standards
- Biodiversity and forests²⁷

The survey questions below were not filled out by the ESDN's Belgian National Focal Points, but rather filled out by the Federal Council on Sustainable Development. The views expressed in the survey answers do not 100% reflect the views of the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development.

²⁶ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/en/the-council>.

²⁷ <https://www.frdo-cfdd.be/en/le-conseilen/groupe-de-travail>.

Key Principles of Stakeholder Participation	How the Principles are Fulfilled
<p><u>Inclusion:</u> citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved</p>	<p>Through the FRDO-CFDD, stakeholders are involved in sustainable development policy processes, but not always intensely or directly. Instruments foreseen in the Belgian sustainable development law or in the policy notes of the responsible minister are not always used as it should be.</p> <p>Concerning the SDGs, stakeholders participated in several opinions issued by the council, but as there is – currently – no official SDG Strategy of the federal government and as the announced ‘SDG Action Plan’ will probably only be available after the coming elections in 2019, with possible feedback by the FRDO-CFDD only after the action plan will be ready. Therefore, one cannot say that there is a qualitative participation by stakeholders.</p>
<p><u>Equal Partnership:</u> it should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status</p>	<p>Within the FRDO-CFDD, the division of seats with voting rights is organized on the basis of the sustainable development legal framework. Example: the trade unions have 6 seats and the environmental NGOs have 3 seats.</p>
<p><u>Increasing knowledge:</u> stakeholders possess different kinds of ‘knowledge’ (e.g. expert, regional/local, or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues.</p>	<p>The FRDO-CFDD has several tasks, as foreseen in the Belgian sustainable development law. One of the main tasks of the FRDO-CFDD is the drafting of opinions on sustainable development issues. The opinions are prepared in working groups. In these working groups all member groups can make use of their knowledge and experiences. Members also have the possibility to invite experts into the working groups.</p>
<p><u>Transparency:</u> all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue</p>	<p>The process of preparing an opinion is as transparent as possible. The methods used guarantee maximum transparency.</p>
<p><u>Access to information:</u> all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process</p>	<p>The information we receive or collect while preparing an opinion is available for all members.</p>
<p><u>Ownership:</u> Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their ‘ownership’ of the outcomes of participation</p>	<p>Next to issuing opinions, FRDO-CFDD organizes seminars and conferences and publishes newsletters. The council’s secretariat facilitates these processes and hopes to enhance the possibility of ownership by their members.</p>
<p><u>Sharing responsibility:</u> each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process</p>	<p>All member groups in the council can become involved in the preparation of opinions if they wish to. They do not, however, all have the same amount of votes in the general council. If possible, the council works on the basis of consensual decisions.</p>
<p><u>Empowerment:</u> it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results</p>	<p>The decision process within the council is as transparent as possible. However, the council does not have a real impact on what is done by the government with the opinions they draw up.</p>
<p><u>Process design:</u> the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.)</p>	<p>The council’s secretariat does whatever is within its means to work as efficiently as possible for the members. Regularly, however, the amount of time the government gives the council to prepare an opinion is too short to deliver work of the best quality possible in a way that is doable for the FRDO-CFDD’s members.</p>

Integrating in existing decision procedures: Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process	Only for some specific issues is the government obliged to ask for an opinion. In those cases, the impact of the council's opinions is more or less measurable. In all the other cases, the council asks the government to give feedback on what they have done with the council's opinions. However, answers from the government are not always given, and often, the council cannot say whether their opinions have really led to a real change in what the government was planning to do.
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Estonia

In Estonia, stakeholders are mainly involved via the Estonian Sustainable Development Commission. The Commission involves organizations from all SDG related fields (environment, universities, children, business, health, energy, local government, etc.).²⁸

In April 2018, the Estonian Coalition for Sustainable Development was founded by active stakeholders who wanted to more closely cooperate in the implementation of the SDGs. The Government Office and the Ministry of Environment also joined the Coalition. The Coalition is planning to create a web-based platform for better involving different actors from different sectors into SDG implementation.

In 2018, the Coalition, in cooperation with the center for policy studies Praxis, analyzed how the policy coherence principles are implemented in Estonia. The plan is to provide input to the development plans and regulations and to create a meaningful and up-to-date engagement portal www.hoolin.ee in order to raise society's awareness about sustainable development.

The Coalition welcomes all those who want to express their views and form new partnerships that focus on concrete actions in implementing the SDGs and on sustainable development at community, social and political levels – entrepreneurs, NGOs, policy-makers and decision-makers.²⁹

Key Principles of Stakeholder Participation	How the Principles are Fulfilled
<u>Inclusion</u>: citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved	<p>The <i>Code of Good Engagement</i> adopted by the Government states that government institutions must involve interest groups and the general public when making decisions affecting them. The most important decisions and drafts will be put up for public consultation. This way, the representatives of various interest groups can provide their opinions and draw attention to important aspects of the topics pertaining to their respective fields.</p> <p>The decision-making process of both the government and the parliament is open and online since the initiation of a draft until its publication. The database for government-prepared draft legislation and the official procedure environment – <i>The Electronic Coordination System for Draft Legislation (EIS)</i> - is an e-environment accessible to everyone, where documents are coordinated between public authorities, forwarded, and presented at government sessions and public consultations. Interested parties can request that alerts on new drafts of their particular interest be added to the system, and they can therefore be informed on the proceedings and contents of the documents being processed. It is possible to give feedback online</p>

²⁸ Mulholland, E (2018). p. 55.

²⁹ <https://www.sei.org/featured/coalition-sustainable-development-founded/>.

	<p>on drafts being prepared during the phase of public consultation and coordination.</p> <p>Besides that, stakeholder organisations that represent affected groups are consulted during the decision-making process.</p>
Equal Partnership: it should be recognised that every citizen and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status	All stakeholders can have an overview on the decision-making process and can give their opinion during the process.
Increasing knowledge: stakeholders possess different kinds of 'knowledge' (e.g. expert, regional/local, or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues.	The ability of stakeholders to bring in quality and useful opinions varies between different organizations. There is a special government measure for supporting the capacity building of non-government organizations.
Transparency: all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue	<p>The Electronic Coordination System for Draft Legislation (EIS) shows whether stakeholders have given their opinion during the specific policy-making process (draft legislation or action plan) and what their opinion was and what the ministries' response was to it.</p> <p>Everyday practice shows that not all stakeholders are able and interested in contributing to all the policies and all draft legislation. Usually, stakeholders are involved in the processes that interest them most.</p>
Access to information: all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process	This is guaranteed by the Electronic Coordination System for Draft Legislation (EIS). It is accessible to everyone, where documents are coordinated between public authorities, forwarded, and presented at government sessions and public consultations. Interested parties can request that alerts on new drafts of their particular interest be added to the system, and they can therefore be informed on the proceedings and contents of the documents being processed.
Ownership: Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their 'ownership' of the outcomes of participation	An example from the strategic planning process: When drafting the government's development plan, representatives from the relevant stakeholder organizations are involved in the working groups, who are drafting the development plan. For example, in the SDG field, stakeholder organizations that represent different SDG topics were involved in agreeing and deciding on Estonian sustainable development indicators.
Sharing responsibility: each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process	It is probably different in different fields of policy-making. One example of sharing responsibilities between different stakeholders and ministries was when it was decided how the trade of renewable energy statistics should be organized and institutionalized in Estonia. The Government Office put together an expert group of government officials and renewable energy stakeholders and producers, who agreed on their responsibilities in the process of trading renewable energy statistics.
Empowerment: it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results	<p>Usually ministries give feedback to stakeholders: whether and how their opinion has been taken into account. Sometimes it is rather general and stakeholders feel that their opinion did not count.</p> <p>Sometimes the stakeholders' part is more visible. For example, by renewing the Estonian National Reform Programme this year, all stakeholders could bring in their opinions. Altogether, stakeholders gave 91 proposals, which were discussed during the stakeholder seminar, and agreed which were the most relevant. The Government's Economic Development Committee decided to</p>

	approve 10 concrete proposals and add those to the renewed National Reform Programme. This feedback was also given to stakeholders.
Process design: the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.)	The <i>Good Code of Engagement</i> states that public consultation should last at least 4 weeks. It would give enough time for stakeholders to prepare their positions. There is a special government measure for supporting the capacity building of stakeholder organizations.
Integrating in existing decision procedures: Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process	Participatory processes are linked to existing decision-making processes.

Finland

Stakeholders are an integral part of Finland’s approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda. They are involved in great numbers in the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD), as well as in the sister committee on Development Policy.

The FNCSD is chaired by the Finnish Prime Minister and is also comprised of high level ministers, government officials, business and industry representatives, municipal governments, church groups, trade unions, NGOs, and representatives from the scientific community.

An independent panel of scientific experts was established in early 2014. The expert panel scans the main obstacles and research concerning sustainable development, raises questions that should be taken into discussion and gives input to the work of the FNCSD. It also evaluates the implementation process of “[Society’s Commitment to Sustainable Development: The Finland we want by 2050](#)”, the main strategy document for sustainable development in Finland, which has been designed especially for stakeholders to participate with their own concrete actions. The strategic framework of “Society’s Commitment” was negotiated in the National Commission, thus the views of the stakeholders are incorporated in the vision, principles, and strategic objectives of the “Commitment”.

The work of the FNCSD is outlined and prepared by an inter-ministerial secretariat, which operates as a network and convenes 8-10 times a year. The secretariat comprises about 20 members from different ministries, each taking the lead in preparations for themes within their area of expertise.³⁰

At a strategy level, the FNCSD joined a group of 18 experts, civil servants etc., working for the Ministry of Environment to prepare a proposal for “Society’s Commitment”. The proposal was approved in December 2013. The vision of the “Society’s Commitment” is a prosperous Finland within the limits of the carrying capacity of nature.

Through the commitment, the government and the administration, in collaboration with companies, organizations and citizens, pledge to promote sustainable development in all their work and operations.

In order to make the vision for 2050 a reality, Finland will focus on achieving the following objectives.

³⁰ <https://www.ncsds.org/index.php/sustainable-development-councils/85-country-profiles/176-finland>.

1. Equal prospects for well-being
2. A participatory society for citizens
3. Sustainable work
4. Sustainable local communities
5. A carbon-neutral society
6. An economy that is resource-wise
7. Lifestyles that respect the carrying capacity of nature
8. Decision-making that respects nature

In order to reach the eight objectives, operational commitments will be established with administrative sectors and other societal actors, such as companies, municipalities, organizations, educational institutions and local operators. The operational commitments include concrete measures, changes in operating procedures and innovative trials that promote the shared goals. The commitments have to be new and measurable. The commitments are recorded on a web-based database, where their progress will also be monitored with the help of process indicators. All commitments are available on the website www.sitoumus2050.fi.³¹

Stakeholders were also involved in the preparation of the “[Government Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)” (the Finnish Government’s implementation plan, given to the Parliament as a Government report), as well as in the design and development of the national sustainable development indicators.³²

Key Principles of Stakeholder Participation	How the Principles are Fulfilled
<u>Inclusion:</u> citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved	The National Commission for Sustainable Development (NCSO) is the main mechanism through which stakeholders are involved in policy-making processes.
<u>Equal Partnership:</u> it should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status	In addition to the NCSO, Finland organizes open consultations in important policy processes. For instance, open consultations have been organized when the government drafted the national implementation plan in 2016, or during the evaluation of national sustainable development policy in 2018.
<u>Increasing knowledge:</u> stakeholders possess different kinds of ‘knowledge’ (e.g. expert, regional/local, or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues.	The NCSO is comprised of representatives from different stakeholder groups: public sector, private sector, academia, labor unions, employers’/industry federations, regional councils, and NGO’s, which all have different kinds of knowledge.
<u>Transparency:</u> all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue	The NCSO and the government strive for transparency by having open consultations and communicating openly on Finnish sustainable development policies and activities.
<u>Access to information:</u> all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process	All key documents are public. The principle of openness is defined in the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999), which states that all official documents shall be in the public domain, unless specifically otherwise provided.
<u>Ownership:</u> Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their	The key idea of <i>Society’s Commitment</i> is to promote sustainable development through concrete public commitments that stakeholders define and make themselves, and thus creates ownership of sustainable development.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mulholland, E (2018). p. 56.

'ownership' of the outcomes of participation	
Sharing responsibility: each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process	Some stakeholders assume more responsibility than others. <i>Society's Commitment</i> and the Finnish model of promoting sustainable development departs from the idea of self-motivated action.
Empowerment: it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results	Open consultations in recent years have been very instructive when it comes to finding the right balance between the expectations of participants and many other realities that affect the outcomes of processes.
Process design: the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.)	Many participatory processes do not require excessive resources from the participants / stakeholders. The most obvious limit to participation in many cases is a geographical limit, e.g. it is often easier for stakeholders based in the capital area to participate than stakeholders from other parts of the country. In recent consultations, this has been taken into account, at least to some extent, by organizing webinars, etc.
Integrating in existing decision procedures: Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process	There are some processes where the participatory element has been integrated into existing official procedures, e.g. national indicator/follow-up system, where open platforms for comments from researchers and lay citizens is an integral part of the whole follow-up system.

Italy

Following the principles of the 2030 Agenda, a multilevel consultation approach was at the core of the NSDS, which included central and regional institutions, as well as the research community and civil society. They all actively contributed to the definition of the NSDS content throughout the entire process.

More than 200 NGOs were involved, providing a valuable contribution to the context analysis and useful inputs to reflect the vision of the 2030 Agenda into the NSDS. Universities and research agencies were also hugely involved to verify and consolidate the technical-scientific basis and contents of the context analysis. This bottom-up approach aimed at collecting requests and contributions concerning both the challenges and priorities to be faced, as well as the long-term vision to be built.

Stakeholders involved in the NSDS definition process are directly engaged in carrying out initiatives linked to SDGs and NSDS implementation. Among others, the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), established in February 2016, gathers over 180 civil society organizations, several Italian universities and different stakeholders engaged in contributing to the 2030 Agenda. In May 2017, ASviS launched the first edition of the annual Sustainable Development Festival, a large-scale awareness raising campaign to foster cultural-political reflections on the issue of sustainable development across the all of Italy.

The National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) was approved by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE) in December 2017, in accordance with the provisions of Law 221/2015. The NSDS is an update of the former Environmental Action Strategy for Sustainable Development (2002-2010) widened to define broad guidelines for economic, social and environmental policies, aimed at achieving the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda in Italy. The

document approved includes a set of strategic choices and national goals organized in six areas (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership and sustainability Vectors). It also outlines a governance system for the implementation of the NSDS, where the Presidency of the Council of Ministers coordinates the implementation of the NSDS, with the support of the Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, for the internal dimension, and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, for the external dimension. The Ministry of Finance is tasked to link the NSDS implementation process with the official economic policy documents. Each Italian Ministry will be, also, involved and will provide its contribution according to its individual expertise. In line with the document approved, the Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea is also tasked to ensure forms of public consultation by creating a Forum on Sustainable Development, in cooperation with the other administrations. The Forum will be open to civil society and relevant stakeholders and will be built upon the positive experience of the NSDS consultation process.

The Forum on sustainable development will be launched in the second half of 2018, providing a wide role of civil society in implementing the NSDS and the 2030 Agenda in Italy.

Key Principles of Stakeholder Participation	How the Principles are Fulfilled
<p><u>Inclusion:</u> citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved</p>	<p>The multilevel consultation approach that was at the core of the NSDS was developed in several phases until the approval of the National Strategy and is in line with the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Ministry of the Environment is currently working on the development of the structure and organization of the Forum on Sustainable Development. The Forum will have the task of supporting the process of implementation of the national and regional sustainable development strategies, as well as guarantying an effective exchange of information and networking among the stakeholders involved in the decision-making process.</p> <p>Following the experience of the NSDS, the Forum on Sustainable Development will involve members, individuals or organizations (public law entities, associations, businesses, cooperatives, consortia), directly affected by the NSDS objectives.</p>
<p><u>Equal Partnership:</u> it should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status</p>	<p>The NSDS building path included an extensive public consultation process. More than 200 NGOs, Universities and research agencies were hugely involved to provide contributions to the context analysis and inputs for the definition of both NSDS’s long-term vision and objectives.</p> <p>Also, the first version of the NSDS was presented by the Ministry of the Environment to civil society, in a public event, in March 2017. Meanwhile, a public consultation process was launched and NSDS’s documents were published on the Ministry’s website.</p>
<p><u>Increasing knowledge:</u> stakeholders possess different kinds of ‘knowledge’ (e.g. expert, regional/local, or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues.</p>	<p>The NSDS represents a broad guideline for economic, social and environmental policies, aimed at achieving the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda in Italy. On this basis, a multilevel consultation process involving central and regional institutions, civil society, and university and research agencies, working in the field of sustainable development and representing all the three dimensions of sustainability was developed. Requests and contributions concerning both the challenges and priorities to be faced and the long-term vision to be built were collected, which lead to the definition of widely shared national objectives.</p>

	The Forum will be built upon the effective experience of the NSDS, giving continuity to this multilevel consultation approach.
<u>Transparency:</u> all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue	<p>The path of implementation of the NSDS was developed through formal processes of consultation that involved a various set of actions, including periodic meetings and standardized procedures for the exchange of documents, information and contributions with the stakeholders involved.</p> <p>Likewise, the Forum on sustainable development will guarantee transparency and effectiveness of the consultation process, for example through periodic meetings, networking initiatives identified together with stakeholders and periodic reports.</p> <p>Apart from this, the NSDS foresees an annual monitoring of its implementation status that is also based on the indicators provided by the National Institute of Statistics and by institutions belonging to SISTAN. In this regard, the Forum can offer the opportunity to share the monitoring path and its results with stakeholders.</p>
<u>Access to information:</u> all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process	<p>In several phases, all along the NSDS's consultation process, stakeholders had access to relevant information and documents and had the opportunity to provide suggestions and contributions. Currently, the document of the NSDS approved by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE) in December 2017 and a description of the NSDS's building process, is available on the Ministry's website.</p> <p>With regard to the NSDS's implementation phase, the Forum on sustainable development, will be developed according to the requests of the State-Region Conference and in line with CIPE Deliberation, putting in place instruments (e.g. an IT platform) that can facilitate the exchange and sharing of experiences and provide an informative support for the monitoring of the Strategy.</p>
<u>Ownership:</u> Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their 'ownership' of the outcomes of participation	The Forum on sustainable development will allow permanent consultation activities, aimed at giving visibility and enhancement to the results achieved and at providing an opportunity to monitor the implementation status of the Strategy. Stakeholders should be prepared to participate actively, for example by attending meetings systematically, contributing substantially to the process, examining and providing comments on documents under discussion.
<u>Sharing responsibility:</u> each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process	The Ministry for the Environment is actually working on the hypothesis that the Forum on Sustainable Development can offer well-structured and effective occasions for discussion and exchange, as well as foster consensual decisions.
<u>Empowerment:</u> it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results	The Forum on sustainable development will be built on the basis of a transparent regulation that identifies its objectives and defines its composition, organization and working methods.
<u>Process design:</u> the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.)	The Forum on sustainable development will meet a limited number of times a year (e.g. twice a year) in order to guarantee the continuity of the consultation process and, at the same time, allow and facilitate stakeholder participation in relation to the available resources.

<p><u>Integrating in existing decision procedures:</u> Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process</p>	<p>The Forum on Sustainable Development represents the key participative mechanism supporting the decision-making process for the implementation of the NSDS at national and regional level.</p>
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Findings on Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in the different European Countries

1. **Inclusion:** *citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process should be involved.*

All of the surveyed countries does have stakeholder inclusion activities. In each of the countries, there are, however, varying degrees of stakeholder inclusion in the policy-making process. In Belgium, stakeholders are involved in the sustainable development policy process. However, the lack of a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) makes it difficult to determine the extent of qualitative stakeholder inclusion and participation. Estonia makes available online all parliamentary policies. When these policies are in their draft form, they are open up for comments. Additionally, if any stakeholder group is directly affected by a decision, then they are consulted during the policy-making process. Finland has strong stakeholder involvement in the National Council for Sustainable development. Italy relied very much on stakeholder inclusion and consultation in the drafting of their NSDS. This theme of involving stakeholders will continue with the Forum on Sustainable Development, which is foreseen to be set up by the end of 2018.

2. **Equal Partnership:** *it should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status.*

In Estonia, Finland, and Italy each stakeholder representative has the right to participate in the policy-making process and can share their opinions. In Belgium, however, only a select number of seats in the Federal Council for Sustainable Development have the right to cast their votes on positions. Even within the Council, the distribution of votes is not necessarily equal among the stakeholder groups.

3. **Increasing knowledge:** *stakeholders possess different kinds of 'knowledge' (e.g. expert, regional/local or context specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues.*

All of the countries surveyed make use of different kinds of stakeholder knowledge to inform the policy-making process and to better understand certain issues. In Estonia, stakeholders are able to request alerts for policies for which they have a special interest.

4. **Transparency:** *all participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue.*

Each of the four countries has some degree of transparency built into their cooperation processes. Belgium has transparency built into their Council when it drafts its opinion pieces to policies. Estonia makes use of its Electronic Coordination System for Draft Legislation, which is able to show all draft legislation being considered, which offers stakeholders the chance to comment upon it. Additionally, the Coordination System allows everyone to see which stakeholder groups commented, what they said, as well as the ministries' response to that opinion. Finland and Italy are similar in their

transparency mechanisms, where both countries exchange knowledge during the consultation process, which is done through periodic meetings.

5. **Access to information:** *all participants should have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process.*

Access to relevant information in each of these countries is guaranteed to some extent. For Belgium, it is the case when the Council forms opinions that all members are provided with the same documents and information. In Estonia, Finland and Italy, stakeholders have access to information all along the process. Estonia has the Electronic System, all of Finland's key policy documents belong to the public domain unless otherwise specified and so can be viewed by all stakeholders, and Italy makes information available all along the cooperation process.

6. **Ownership:** *Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their 'ownership' of the outcomes of participation.*

Estonia, Finland and Italy all expect stakeholders to be heavily involved in the policy-making process, and thereby increase ownership. Estonia makes use of relevant stakeholder groups in their strategic planning processes to bring in opinions of stakeholders with an interest in the topic or legislation that is up for discussion. In Finland, "Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development" is the guiding policy document for the entire country when it comes to sustainable development and calls upon all societal actors to engage with sustainable development in their own way and take ownership. Italy expects their stakeholder groups to become very active in the Forum on Sustainable Development, taking an enhanced role in the entire process, attend regular meetings, and participate fully by providing insights, sharing knowledge and providing feedback on documents and policies that will be up for discussion. Belgium, on the other hand, and apart from publishing the Council's opinions, also holds seminars and publishes newsletters.

7. **Sharing responsibility:** *each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process.*

The responsibilities of stakeholders in each of the four surveyed countries vary. In each country, the particulars on responsibility depend on the stakeholders involved, as well as the particular policy field. In some cases, such as in Finland, some stakeholder groups take more responsibility than others. The same is true in Estonia. In Belgium, all stakeholder members of the Council can contribute to opinions, but only the members can vote in the General Council, where some stakeholder groups have more votes. The Ministry of Environment in Italy is working on the base of the Forum, which will seek to offer stakeholders a well-structured occasion for discussions, exchange and set the stage for consensual decision-making.

8. **Empowerment:** *it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results.*

When it comes to the empowerment of stakeholders, Belgium and Estonia have a certain incredulity regarding the processes that have been established in their countries, as stakeholders do not necessarily feel empowered by policy-makers when they have shared their opinions on policies. In Belgium, the Council does not have any real impact on the government or what the government will do with any opinions they have shared. Estonia is much the same, as stakeholders oftentimes feel as if the feedback they receive from ministries on the Electronic System are too general, which leave stakeholders feeling as if their opinions do not really count or do not really matter. Both of these effects can have negative consequences for overall empowerment, as an empowering process, which

the opinion sharing processes of these two countries are, should not leave stakeholders feeling less empowered having gone through it. These processes leave stakeholders feeling just that way.

Finland, however, has learned to better manage the expectation of stakeholders and find a balance between these expectations and the realities that affect the outcomes of decision-making processes. Italy will attempt to create empowerment through the Forum on Sustainable Development and through heightened transparency.

9. **Process design:** *the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc.).*

The resources that stakeholders have are a huge factor in how stakeholders can participate and which stakeholders can participate in policy-making processes. In Belgium, the Council feels that the government does not provide them with adequate time to formulate high quality opinions in a way that is workable for the Council. However, in Estonia, draft legislation must be available for stakeholder comments for four weeks. Additionally, the government offers capacity building to stakeholder organizations. In Finland, it was found that stakeholders are oftentimes limited by geographical location, which can create many imbalances between stakeholders. However, consultations can now be done via that Internet and webinars. Italy foresees the Forum meeting twice per year in an effort to guarantee the continuity of the entire process, while, at the same time, being aware and conscious of stakeholder resources.

10. **Integrating in existing decision procedures:** *participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process.*

In Belgium, it is not always clear how the Council's opinions inform the policy-making process, as government feedback is either non-existent or too general. Estonia, on the other hand, has integrated its participative and cooperative processes into already existing decision-making processes. For Finland, some processes have a participatory and cooperative nature to them and have been integrated into existing processes, such as the indicator system. In Italy, the Forum represents the key cooperative mechanism and is new.

Chapter 5: Stakeholder Activities and Initiatives for the Implementation of the SDGs

The stakeholder organizations and their activities, which are described below, reflect how diverse reactions and activities surrounding the SDGs can be and how different organizations are able to engage in a myriad of ways with the SDGs.

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

GRI strongly believes that the private sector is key to the realization and implementation of the SDGs. GRI has been proactive in facilitating business engagement in the SDGs since they were negotiated. By reporting on their progress, companies can reflect and improve their performance, which enables meaningful progress. In this framework, the [SDG 12.6 live tracker was developed](#). SDG target 12.6 is measured by the number of companies that publish sustainability reports in a country. The live tracker is an online tool developed by GRI, and powered by TCS, which offers an overview of progress on corporate sustainability reporting around the world. This tool contains information to support the monitoring of indicator 12.6.1 and can inform a country's national monitoring process.

Already in 2015, GRI, in collaboration with the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), launched the [SDG Compass](#), a guide to help businesses align their strategies with the SDGs and measure and manage their contribution. In 2017, as part of the *Business Reporting on the SDGs Action Platform*, in partnership with the UN Global Compact, GRI developed [An Analysis of the Goals and Targets](#) and [Integrating the SDGs into corporate reporting: a Practical Guide](#), first steps towards a uniform mechanism for businesses to report on their contribution to, and impact on, the SDGs in an effective and comparable way.

To make an accurate assessment of progress on the SDGs, it is crucial to capture the contribution and impact of the private sector. One example of how the tools provided by GRI can help towards this goal is the local-led pilot set up by the National Planning Department of Colombia and UNDP/Business Call to Action with the support and guidance of GRI. This pilot mined and aggregated private sector data on a selected number of topics using the publicly disclosed information. The results were captured in the brochure [The Private Sector and its Contribution to the SDGs: A Journey to Data Gathering Through Corporate Sustainability Reporting in Colombia](#) and fed into the [Voluntary National Review](#) presented at the 2018 High Level Political Forum in New York.

11.11.11: The coalition of NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders

11.11.11 is the coalition of NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders (Dutch speaking Northern part of Belgium). 11.11.11 combines the efforts of 70 organizations and 340 committees of volunteers (about 20 000 volunteers) who work together to achieve one common goal: a fair world without poverty.

Millions of people are still seeing their rights violated: they do not have access to sufficient food, clean drinking water, health care, basic education, a viable income, security or freedom of speech. Every day and all over the world, people are fighting to make a decent living.

11.11.11 fights with them by supporting development initiatives in the South, by lobbying national and international governments and organizations, by campaigning in Belgium for a solidary world.

United Nations Environment Assembly

Within the United Nations, UN Environment is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

UN Environment is working with all concerned parties to support the achievement of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN Environment promotes environmental sustainability as a crucial enabling factor in implementing the SDGs and ensuring the health of the planet. UN Environment also builds countries' capacities to track their progress toward the goals, and aims to ensure that the environment is integrated into all aspects of sustainable development.

Four core principles underpin UN Environment's approach to the 2030 Agenda: Universality, Integration, Human rights and Equity and Innovation

Within UN Environment, the Civil Society Unit is in charge to enable stakeholder participation in the work of the organization and with the United Nations Environment Assembly and its Subsidiary Organs. The Assembly, sometimes also referred to as the "Parliament of the Environment", is an important platform to address the environmental dimension of the SDGs. It enjoys the universal membership of all 193 UN Member States and the full involvement of Major Groups and Stakeholders. With this wide reach into the legislative, financial and development arenas, the Environment Assembly provides a groundbreaking platform for leadership on global environmental policy. The next Assembly will take place in March 2019 in Nairobi under the overarching theme "Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production". It will feature various opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including a Science-Policy-Business Forum, a Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, a Sustainable Innovation Forum and other events that will allow various stakeholders to engage with decisions makers.

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

The Council of the Baltic Sea States is an overall political forum for regional cooperation. Consisting of 11 Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, and Sweden), as well as a representative of the European Union, it supports a global perspective on regional problems. Among others, these include politically and practically translating the UN 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Climate Agreement into regional actions on the ground.

The UN 2030 Agenda acknowledges "the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions", which "can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at national level". The CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development – Baltic 2030 has taken up this call and committed to making the Baltic Sea region a frontrunner in the implementation of the global goals by adopting macro-regional cooperation as a multi-stakeholder framework for joint action and capacity-building. The members of CBSS Baltic 2030 are government institutions, numerous pan-Baltic and international and non-governmental organizations, academic, as well as local and city networks.

The main initiatives and achievements of the CBSS Baltic 2030 include:

1. Setting a political framework for cooperation on 2030 Agenda at transnational level. In June 2017 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 11 CBSS member states endorsed the document,

Baltic 2030 Action Plan - a common vision for achieving sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region through transnational collaboration and better alignment of policies.

2. Monitoring the progress on SDGs performance in the Baltic Sea region. The recent CBSS Baltic 2030 report “Baltic 2030: Bumps on the Road – How the Baltic Sea States are performing on the SDGs” provides an overview of the 2030 Agenda implementation in the Baltic Sea region countries. The report also reflects on joint actions which the countries can take further to overcome our shared challenges.
3. The Baltic 2030 Leadership Programme on 2030 Agenda. Overall aim is to strengthen the institutional capacity and skills of sustainability leaders to adopt the 2030 Agenda as a strategic framework at subnational level. The Programme involves national-, local and sub-regional actors and supports peer-learning and exchange on integrated approaches and looking into the potentials of adopting the SDGs framework at local level, in coordination with the national objectives.
4. Youth engagement - ReGeneration 2030. ReGeneration 2030 was initiated by the BSR Youth Councils in 2017 with the aim to develop a framework of youth collaboration around the 2030 Agenda and SDG12. With its activities, ReGeneration 2030 helps to create a shared identity, a sense of belonging and of “doing together” in the interests of present and future generations. More than 100 young people from 11 Baltic Sea Region (BSR) countries met in August 2018 in Åland Islands, Finland for the first Summit which endorsed the ReGeneration 2030 Manifesto. The Manifesto reflects youth commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and outlines demands for the governments and businesses to support the shift toward more socially and environmentally responsible sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Kehys, the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU

Kehys is an advocacy network of Finnish NGOs that promotes a globally sustainable European Union. The main aims and core values of Kehys include eradication of poverty, reducing inequality, respect for human rights and equal opportunities. Kehys is an expert organization in the topics of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), global citizenship education and active citizenship, and sustainable economy. Kehys has 38 member associations, Finnish NGOs working on sustainable development issues.

As a national platform, Kehys builds the operating, knowledge, networking and advocacy capacities of Finnish of civil society organizations regarding sustainable development. Kehys also coordinates joint advocacy and engages in dialogue with other stakeholders about Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.

Kehys is known to be active in various international civil society networks, playing an active role in the global Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD) network, Forus (formerly known as the International Forum of National Platforms), CONCORD Europe and SDG Watch Europe.

Kehys promotes multi-stakeholder approaches and engages in the OECD-led Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Partnership, and the Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development and the Finnish Development Policy Committee at national level.

Kehys is currently building a new Finnish umbrella organization called Fingo with Kepa. The new organization will have around 300 member organizations and a focus on sustainable development and global justice.

European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organizations in Europe and represents 104 youth organizations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe towards the EU, the Council of Europe, and the UN.

The Youth Forum works to empower young people as agents of their own, sustainable future, and advocates for policy change and a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the EU and European governments. The Youth Forum also supports their member organizations in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, for instance, during the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, as well as build up the capacity of youth organizations and young people to become engaged, through trainings, on topics such as climate change or the SDGs.

The Youth Forum's work is based on the recognition that there is a need for new and transformative approaches, such as systems thinking or narrative campaigning, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Trying to solve problems, issue by issue or SDG by SDG, is an ill-suited method given the systemic and complex nature of today's problems. Instead, we need to focus on the root causes of global problems. Likewise, only focusing on rational arguments is insufficient, as cultural change is necessary for sustainable development. Strategies to promote sustainable development require changing mindsets and creating an on-going momentum with young people for a sustainable transformation.

Read more about the Youth Forum's work on their website: www.youthforum.org/change.

Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)

The Alliance, which already brings together over 200 of the most important civil society institutions and networks, aims to raise the awareness of the Italian society, economic stakeholders and institutions about the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to mobilize them in order to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As an example of the Alliance's advocacy campaigns, the Alliance publicly proposed to establish a National Commission entirely dedicated to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: this Commission was officially created few weeks ago, under the leadership of the Italian Prime Minister.

Below are some of the other activities from the Alliance that set up new ways of cooperation between policymakers and civil society:

1. The Alliance directed its efforts towards the inclusion, by political parties, of the principles of the 2030 Agenda in electoral programmes. It did so by calling parties to confrontation in an event titled "Politics and the challenge of sustainable development";
2. In the field of sustainable development education, the Alliance signed a memorandum of understanding with the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Scientific Research (Miur): ASviS designed an e-learning course on the 2030 Agenda for schools and teacher, organized and initiated the ASviS-Miur contest for schools on the SDGs, and contributed to the launch of three university Master's degrees;
3. ASviS developed statistical tools to monitor Italy's pace of implementation of the SDGs and an analytical model to evaluate the impact of various policies. Results can be read by accessing the Alliance's new database;
4. The Alliance saw Italian municipalities commit to sustainability through an "Agenda for sustainable urban development", co-drafted by ASviS and Urban@it, the National center for urban policy studies;

5. On September 28th, the Alliance presented its 2017 Report, detailing Italy's position vis à vis the SDGs and illustrating, through innovative statistical and analytical tools, concrete policy proposals to enhance the population's quality of life, reduce inequalities and protect the environment, as well as assessing the impact of suggested policies up to 2030.

Moreover, ASviS develops the Sustainable Development Festival, a national awareness-raising campaign launched by the Alliance every year to promote and spread a culture of sustainability among the Italian society. ASviS organizes the Festival together with its members and with the support of its partners, over the course of 17 days, as many as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envisaged by the 2030 Agenda. The initiative constitutes a single large-scale, inclusive and widespread event: in 2018 more than 700 events scattered across Italy thanks to the Festival. Please find attached a document with some of the main results from the latest edition. The Festival was also one of the main contribution to the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW), whose logo was featured through all the Festival's communication channels and materials.

SDG Watch Europe

SDG Watch Europe is an EU-level, cross-sectoral CSO alliance of NGOs from development, environment, social, human rights and other sectors. Its goal is to hold governments to account for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

The tasks of SDG Watch Europe are divided between 4 interlinked Work Strands to ensure coherence at all levels:

Strand 1: Joint High Level Policy & Coordination for Ambitious and Integrated EU SDG Implementation

The work of this strand involves examining the adequacy of existing EU strategies, policies and practices in light of the need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. This includes the demand to carry out a "gap-analysis" of EU policy frameworks and processes, and calling for their revision or replacement where appropriate.

Policy proposals based on common principles and cross-cutting issues, once developed together, will be advanced through joint high-level advocacy and through members supporting each other with more technical advocacy. All members take the lead on those domains where they have the obvious expertise or mandate. They are encouraged to include other alliance members who wish to engage in the work.

The added value of working together on policy co-ordination to support SDG Watch's advocacy aims is clear. It should lead to greater overall policy coherence, strengthen our advocacy impact and facilitate more synergies and linkages between the work of their different organizations.

Strand 2: Monitoring, Accountability, & Review of European SDG Implementation across All Sectors

Strand 2 will closely follow and report on how the EU and the Member States are dealing with the SDG implementation. Do they have a strategy, plan of implementation, institutionalization of civil society engagement? Are they covering all the goals? At which level?

The leading institutions of the EU and the UN will monitor progress towards the SDGs based on national and regional monitoring.

This monitoring is likely to face several challenges: the ‘creative’ use of data to give the impression of national or regional progress, insufficient data-sets relating to several goals, bias in data-gathering towards quantitative input data rather than qualitative impact data, the ignorance of alternative data sources such as research and civil society, and others. Strand 2 members can play an important role in challenging the EU and Member States to concretize the SDG implementation in a structural way and in insisting on the use of reliable, verifiable and adequate data.

The monitoring information and data linked to SDG implementation from various EU Member States can also be pooled at an EU level, allowing EU wide patterns or trends to emerge which can then be used as part of possible “shadow reports” produced by the SDGs Coalition and submitted to UN bodies such as the HLPF.

The work of this strand will also ensure that the advocacy messages of SDG Watch Europe will be evidence-based, giving them a necessary credibility.

Strand 3: Engaging CSOs & Citizens at Local, National and EU level

SDG Watch Europe will reach out to CSOs (in the EU and other European countries, non EU member states) to raise awareness, promote engagement and to help to build the capacity towards the implementation of the SDGs at all levels.

We need to cater for the actual appetite of people/citizens to get involved. We as CSOs also need to bridge the gap and to engage people and build legitimacy from the bottom-up. SDG Watch Europe shall explore how to work with national platforms and networks to ensure a bottom up approach.

SDG Watch Europe seeks to involve CSOs involved with marginalized citizens, through their European networks. The objectives are to inform them about SDGs related to their situation and facilitate their involvement in order to contribute to advocacy processes at national and EU levels. Similarly, the SDG Watch Europe can create linkages with other campaigns and social movements concerning issues related to advocacy and campaigning and the SDGs. SDG Watch Europe can add value by coordinating key European events (also as part of globally coordinated actions).

SDG Watch Europe can also advocate with decision-makers for space for CSOs to organize, discuss, support, follow & monitor the implementation of the SDGs at EU level (including possibilities of financial support for the SDGs Coalition to fund a secretariat etc.).

Strand 4: Reflection, Innovation, Experimenting & Learning Together

Civil Society in Europe might not be fully SDG-ready itself. Are our ways of working, cooperating and implementing sufficiently advanced integrated and coherent? If we demand this from other actors, we need to take the lead, walk the talk and set the example to follow.

To develop ways of working, Strand 4 will:

- Explore new ways of working, advocating, and monitoring in order to promote and implement the SDG’s – including how sustainable development principles can be fully mainstreamed across the work of our organizations;
- Reflect on how to use the SDGs to bring about systemic change and a shift away from the dominant neoliberal ideology that puts profit and competition first; develop a common or shared vision of the transformation we would like to see;

- Bring new knowledge into the coalition: develop innovative new partnerships academic and research institutes, the private sector and others and continue to learn on how best to achieve Sustainable Development and the SDGs;
- Develop a support structure, or work with existing ones, to assist CSOs through the creation of mutual learning spaces;
- Map the priorities of our organizations and the synergies that exist;
- Strengthen the basis for common action by the members of the SDGs Coalition; and
- Facilitate capacity-building amongst civil society members based on self-assessment of training and development needs. These training and development needs would be linked to CSO involvement in SDG implementation, monitoring and follow-up activities.

Environmental, human rights, social, health, and development organizations are to a very large extent the actors who do the real implementation of the SDGs.

Together with government, and very often financed by governments to do this. This day to day experience of trying to achieve the goals should inform our policy action and is a strong channel for citizen's participation.

Comité 21

Created after the 1992 Rio conference, Comité 21 aims at implementing sustainable development in organizations, companies and territories. It has been a frontrunner in engaging sustainable development issues amongst the various stakeholders in France. This unique network counts more than 450 members and bases its action on multi-actors partnerships, operational action and innovation with more than 26% of businesses (multinational companies and SMEs), 40% of local authorities (city councils, departments and regions), 20% of NGOs (environmental, development, local solidarity, human rights, etc.), and 10% of public institutes and higher education institutions. UNEP and UNDP are also members by right.

Comité 21 is not a think tank, but a "do tank" closely linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in September 2015. The platform encourages dialogue between all, accompanies the development of responsive approaches and produces studies and prospective analyses.

Today, the purpose of Comité 21 is to act as an interface with its members for the ownership and implementation of the SDGs, and especially the prism of the SDG17. Comité 21's roadmap for 2017 "The New World at hand" illustrates this dynamic, including through a number of actions: a Forum on "Social Engagement through the SDGs"; co-construction of a methodological guide to the SDGs; a "Tour de France of the SDGs" to discuss their stakes in the territories; a monthly newsletter dedicated to the SDGs; Workshops on "SDGs and territorial attractiveness" and "SDGs and professions".

Estonian Coalition for Sustainable Development

Civil society has the knowledge, private sector the power over society, environment itself and policy makers and the government is interested in sustainable and all in all good governance model. It is necessary to sit together at one table already in the beginning of the decision-making to bring knowledge of sustainability to the decision-makers, so that what they decide will be beneficial for everyone. Only joint debate can bring us a consensus on our needs, possibilities and a vision for the future.

The coalition for sustainable development unites non-governmental organizations, enterprises and institutions that support the sustainable development strategies of the United Nations with their actions. The coalition is a platform for cooperation for representatives of different sections to create quality input for a sustainable world vision.

The goals of the coalition include:

- offering input to policymaking;
- contributing to foresight;
- enchanting cooperation between members and
- promoting public awareness.

The work of the coalition is based on meaningful meetings, exchanging knowledge and constructive raising of awareness. Roundtables, workshops and trainings are led by experts from Estonia and abroad, to give the members of the coalition the tools necessary for fulfilling the goals.

UK Stakeholder for Sustainable Development

The UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) creates a space to mobilize people, communities and organizations in the UK so they can play their part to create decent work in a prosperous economy and a fair and just society – all within the Earth's limits.

UKSSD's focus and strategy is informed by the expertise of their partners. UKSSD is a multi-stakeholder network, representing organizations from the UK that span the business, civil society, academic and public spheres, irrespective of their interests, size or location.

UKSSD's mission is to inspire, influence and inform people, communities and organizations to transform the UK into a truly sustainable society.

How UKSSD Works:

- Influence: We use our collective voice to influence people, communities and organizations
- Inspire: We work together to drive change and use our actions to inspire others by sharing stories of success
- Inform: We share knowledge and expertise in order that we can all learn

UKSSD's impact is delivered through three main activities:

- Collaborate with partners on activities that support the network and contribute to our vision by influencing people, communities and organizations.
- Create change by presenting challenges in the UK and allowing our partners and network friends to develop solutions to those challenges together, using this to inspire others.
- Share the work of our partners and network whenever we can and act as a platform to elevate your work and to inform others

UKSSD's Values:

The values guiding UKSSD operations and strategic decisions ensure that the network can work together effectively to address the challenges we face in the UK. Their values underpin their purpose, as they develop ways of working and activities they ensure that these values are present.

- Multi-stakeholder: UKSSD treats all as equals irrespective of sector, industry, location or scale;
- Accessible: UKSSD is accessible to every person, organization or community;

- Integrated: UKSSD recognizes that the environment, economy and society are dependent and interconnected;
- Open: UKSSD is honest about their circumstances, the opportunities they have and the risks or challenges they can see; and
- Universal: UKSSD believes that all people, communities and organizations have a role to play and can feel the benefits of the impact they create together.

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions is the European umbrella organization of 60 national associations from 42 countries, representing local and regional governments. Founded in 1951, CEMR is the oldest and broadest organization, covering all levels of territories – local, intermediate and regional. Our work is organized around two main pillars:

1. Influencing European policy and legislation in all areas having an impact on municipalities and regions;
2. Providing a forum for debate between local and regional governments via their national representative associations.

CEMR is also the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the World organization of local and regional governments, and the European partner of the Global Task Force of local and regional governments recognized by the UN in the New Urban Agenda. It is also lead partner of PLATFORMA, the coalition of European local and regional governments committed to international cooperation for sustainable development, recognized by the European Commission through a Strategic Partnership Agreement.

CEMR's work in the implementation of the SDGs: CEMR, in cooperation with its members, engage in awareness raising and mobilization, cooperation and coordination (also with partners at international level), sharing knowledge and experience, and advocating the involvement of local and regional governments at national, European and international level.

CEMR is a member of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the SDGs in the EU, established by the European Commission in 2017 with the objective to provide input to the upcoming reflection paper of the Commission on sustainable Europe. CEMR has drafted the recommendations of the subgroup on “delivering the SDGs at local and regional level”, and we are contributing to the work of other subgroups (e.g. governance, monitoring, global dimension).

CEMR has been involved in the development of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (www.rfsc.eu), an online tool to assist cities to prepare their sustainable development strategy, applying indicators, also the SDGs, to monitor progress and to report.

Conclusion: Ingredients for Successful Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in SDG Implementation

This chapter showcases the results of the ESDN Conference 2018, which took place in Vienna on October 1-2, 2018. In the final session of the conference, all participants (120 from 27 countries) were asked, based on the presentations, discussions and group work during the event, to develop together in various groups ingredients for successful stakeholder-policy cooperation for the implementation of the SDGs. The summary of what the ESDN Conference participants came up with can be found in this section of the Report:

Ingredients for Successful Stakeholder-Policy Cooperation in SDG Implementation

- 1) One of the main ingredients that participants came up with as being important in successful stakeholder-policy cooperation is the **management of expectations**. This goes for the management of stakeholder expectations of one another, of the process, of expected results, etc. Along the same line, the management of goal setting should be able to be achieved.
- 2) **Effective communication** is another ingredient that is important in cooperation, as all stakeholders need to be able to speak the same language when it comes to the SDGs, so that common and joint understandings can be reached.
- 3) **Clarify roles** of all stakeholders involved in the process and how they can work and fit within the cooperative process. This also helps stakeholders know who is responsible for what and can better and more easily commit themselves to the cause and goals of the process.
- 4) **Breaking the silos between stakeholders** was also put forward as an important ingredient for the overall success of cooperative processes. Having the correct stakeholders on-board helps in being able to bridge the gaps between the silos. One must also remember that there are good people in every single stakeholder organization and that these individuals need to be located.
- 5) The **inclusion of politicians and parliaments** in the cooperative processes is important, as legitimately elected officials should not be overruled by stakeholder group desires. Having engaged politicians also helps the overall results of these stakeholder-policy cooperation mechanisms become adopted.
- 6) Most important for any cooperative process is **trust and continuity**. Trust can only be built up over time and this build up takes processes that meet regularly and for extended periods of time. As cooperative mechanisms will inherently have conflicts, the overall success of managing these conflicts in a way that provides positive results requires trust.

