Policy Brief from ESDN Youth Representatives: Integrating Youth Perspectives in Addressing SDG Spillovers

Executive Summary

This policy brief, developed by current ESDN Youth Representatives from across Europe, as a result of the ESDN Youth Workshop 2023 - October 25-28, 2023, Berlin, Germany. The results were presented by ESDN Youth Representatives at, and contributed to, the 8th ESDN Peer Learning Platform - November 9-10, 2023, Bern, Switzerland. It delves into the adverse spillovers of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and proposes youth-inclusive policy solutions. The representatives, after a comprehensive three-day workshop in Berlin in October 2023, identified action fields and put forth recommendations in six key areas: Fast Fashion, Capital Redistribution, Effects of the Triple Planetary Crisis on Health, Climate Justice, Transformative System Change, and Environmental Migration. The document overall emphasizes the need for actionable policies and accountability measures.

An effective way to ensure that more policies are being drafted, become stronger, and have a higher chance of being realized, is to include youth. Since tomorrow is our future, and our present way too soon, the spillovers into tomorrow are avoided by giving the future a seat at the table. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of youth engagement in shaping a sustainable future. This policy brief is a culmination of efforts by ESDN Youth Representatives, aiming to address the negative spillovers of the SDGs through youth-centric policy frameworks.

In presenting this brief, we aim to shed light on the crucial role of youth in global sustainability efforts and propose actionable policies to mitigate the negative spillovers of the SDGs. It is a call to action for integrating youth voices in decision-making processes, ensuring their potential is harnessed in steering our world towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Overall Biggest Challenges

- ➢ Mitigating the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion.
- ➢ Bridging the gap in green finance and addressing global financial inequalities.
- ➢ Addressing the multifaceted challenges of the triple planetary crisis.
- ➢ Ensuring climate justice and representation for vulnerable populations.
- ➢ Implementation & Accountability

Discussion Areas

The following topics are being discussed on the next pages, including policy recommendations:

1. Fast Fashion
2. Capital Redistribution
3. Triple Planetary Crisis
4. Climate Justice
5. Transformative System Change
6. Environmental Migration

Policy Recommendations

1 Fast Fashion

Fast fashion, characterized by rapid production to meet the latest trends, has significant environmental and social impacts. The fashion industry is a major contributor to water pollution, textile waste, and labor exploitation. A study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation revealed that the fashion industry produces over 92 million tons of waste annually.

The need for cross-sectoral collaboration is evident, with a focus on transparency and ethical practices. Education initiatives can play a crucial role in informing consumers about these impacts, potentially shifting demand towards more sustainable products. Additionally, tightening international legal

frameworks is crucial to hold corporations accountable for their environmental footprint.

- o Implement mandatory disclosure requirements for fashion companies on their environmental impact and labor practices.
- o Encourage sustainable fashion through tax incentives for companies that adopt eco-friendly and ethical production methods.
- o Establish global standards for textile recycling and waste management to reduce environmental impact.

2 Redistribution of Capital/Capital Justice

Global financial inequities and inadequate investment in green finance are pressing issues. The UN Environment Programme Finance Initiative highlights the disparity in green investments compared to traditional fossil fuel investments. Effective taxation, redistribution systems, and a shift in economic discourse are needed to bridge this gap.

The Gini coefficient and Doughnut Economics model offer more sustainable metrics than GDP, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of economic and environmental well-being.

- o Introduce carbon taxes to discourage fossil fuel investment and redirect funds towards renewable energy sources.
- o Implement progressive taxation systems to reduce inequality and finance green initiatives.
- o Create financial incentives for investments in sustainable projects, especially in developing countries.

3 The Triple Planetary Crisis Effects on Health (Climate Anxiety, Pollution, Infectious Diseases)

The triple planetary crisis has multiple effects on mental and physical health such as climate anxiety, pollution leading to health hazards,

and the risk of communicable diseases, presenting multifaceted challenges. Climate anxiety, increasingly recognized by health professionals, requires accessible medical and psychological support. In addition to that, the World Health Organization reports significant global health impacts due to air and water pollution, often created as a spillover effect of the consumption in the Global North. Pollution control demands responsible supply chains and consumer incentives, and long-term investments in pollution-capture technologies can contribute to a positive change. Furthermore, natural disasters such as droughts and floods, exacerbated by climate change, create new reservoirs for vector-borne and infectious diseases. Addressing climate change in itself and investing in research against antibiotic resistance is crucial to address these challenges.

Therefore, we urge to:

- o Increase the accessibility of mental health services and expand awareness programs to address climate anxiety.
- o Strengthen regulations on industrial emissions and promote green technology to reduce pollution.
- o Address spillover effects and prevent outsourcing of pollution and other negative externalities.
- o Increase funding for research into new medical treatments and technologies to combat emerging infectious diseases.

4 Climate Justice

Climate justice recognizes the unequal impact of climate change, particularly on vulnerable populations. It is about more than recognition; it involves creating systems to prevent future injustices. An intergenerational, international, and intersocietal approach is essential, focusing on dialogue and accountability. This approach aligns with the principles of decolonization and ensuring representation for those most affected by climate change.

- o Develop international frameworks for compensation to communities disproportionately affected by climate change.
- o Integrate climate education into school curricula to raise awareness of climate justice issues.
- o Ensure participation of marginalized communities in climate policy discussions at all levels.

5 Transformative System Change

Legal frameworks and education are pivotal for transformative system change. Independent reviews of SDG progress, as recommended by bodies like the UN Development Programme, can ensure accountability and transparency. Education, as a tool for change, should be leveraged to increase awareness and drive action towards sustainable development.

- o Mandate transparent reporting on SDG progress by nations, with penalties for non-compliance.
- o Promote interdisciplinary education in sustainability to foster a new generation of environmentally conscious leaders.
- o Encourage public participation in policy-making processes related to sustainable development.

6 Environmental Migration

Environmental migration, driven by climate change, requires urgent attention. Establishing prevention and mitigation mechanisms is essential to reduce the need for migration. Moreover, ensuring safe pathways for environmental migrants involves building networks of resilient cities. The International Organization for Migration notes the increasing trend in environmental migration, emphasizing the need for proactive measures.

- o Develop international agreements to protect and support environmental migrants.

- o Invest in infrastructure and community resilience in areas most susceptible to environmental changes.
- o Establish global funds to assist regions heavily impacted by climate-induced migration.

ESDN Youth Network (2023). "Integrating Youth Perspectives in Addressing SDG Spillovers: Policy Brief from ESDN Youth Representatives". ESDN Policy Brief, Dec. 2023, ESDN Youth Network