ESDNewsletter December 2022

This ESDNewsletter informs about the following topics and activities on sustainable development in Europe.

- **Announcements from the ESDN:**

  - **20th ESDN Workshop** on "SDGs and Human Rights" took place virtually on 23 November 2022
  - **2 ESDN Blog Entries Published** – "ESDN Inspirations" and "Reflections on the ESDN Workshop on the SDGs and Human Rights"
  - **3 ESDN Spotlight Videos** – "Tracking the Recovery with the OECD COVID-19 Dashboard", "Putting the European Green Deal to work", and "Building Forward Better Mechanisms for Sustainable Development"
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  - **Belgium** – SDG project assessment tool for local governments
  - **Ireland** – Ireland's new National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024
  - **Ireland** – Expressions of Interest are now being sought for the SDG Champions Programme 2023
  - **Ireland** – New SDG National Stakeholder Forum Committee
  - **Germany** – "Grundsatzbeschluss": New government updates the German Sustainability Strategy and emphasises its importance
  - **Germany** – More effective sustainability governance structure – start of seven transformation teams (TT)
  - **Germany** – Launch of the "Gemeinschaftswerk Nachhaltigkeit" - Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform
  - **Greece** – Successfully presented its 2nd VNR at the HLP in July 2022
  - **Switzerland** – Toolbox Agenda 2030 for cantons and municipalities
  - **Switzerland** – New presentation of sustainable development indicators for cities and cantons
  - **Switzerland** – Updated indicators for the monitoring of sustainable development at national level

- **News on European Governance for Sustainable Development:**

  - **ICLEI – Europe** – Briefing Paper Published: "Same, Same, but Different: clarifying the relationship between Local Green Deals and Climate City Contracts as non-regulatory governance innovations

Announcements from the ESDN

20th ESDN Workshop:

SDGs and Human Rights – 23 November 2022 (virtual)

The ESDN organized its 20th Workshop in cooperation with the Luxembourgish Ministries of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development and for Foreign and European Affairs **on 23 November 2022** on "**SDGs and Human Rights"**. The Workshop had over 80 registered participants and marked the first time the ESDN had dealt with the topic of the SDGs in the context of human rights.

For more information about the Workshop, including the program, Discussion Paper, keynote presentations and the Workshop Report, please visit the ESDN website.

ESDN Blog

"ESDN Inspirations"

This ESDN Blog features ESDN Vice President Annika Lindblom and ESDN Advisory Board Member Taru Savolainen, where they both reflect on how the ESDN inspires discussion and exchange between colleagues in the sustainable development field. They also discuss the recent ESDN Conference, which was held in October in Bucharest.

To read the Blog in its entirety, visit the ESDN website.

"Reflections on the ESDN Workshop on the SDGs and Human Rights"

This ESDN Blog features ESDN Vice President Marguy Kohnen, who helped in the organization of the 20th ESDN Workshop on behalf of Luxembourg. The Workshop brought together policymakers and experts from stakeholder groups from all over Europe to learn, exchange and share experiences, on the following topics; SDG 5's Impact on Human Rights of Women and Girls, Human Rights Defenders, and on Financing and Governance for Human Rights and SDGs.

To read the Blog in its entirety, visit the ESDN website.

ESDN Spotlight Videos

"Tracking the Recovery with the OECD COVID-19 Dashboard"

Since February 2020, the OECD has been tracking the economic consequences of the pandemic. In this Spotlight Video, Žiga Žarnič, OECD, explains the new OECD COVID-19 recovery dashboard, which measures and shows developments on four indicators: strength, inclusivity, green and resilience.

To watch the video, visit the ESDN website's Spotlight section.

"Putting the European Green Deal to work"

Hans Bruyninckx, the executive director of the European Environmental Agency, shows in this Spotlight Video how the Green Deal is not just a green agenda, but a broader political and economic investment priority.

He explains why it is so important that the social and financial aspects are included in the Green Deal and what this teaches us about governance for sustainability and resilience.

To watch the video, visit the [ESDN website's Spotlight](#) section.

"Building Forward Better Mechanisms for Sustainable Development"

Coming out of the pandemic, Europe's economy looks much better than many predicted. In this Spotlight Video, Magdalena Morgese Borys from the EU Commission Secretariat General explains how coordinated action by Member States and the EU contributed to this outcome.

Learn about the different economic mechanisms of the European Union that aim to foster economic resilience, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Alert Mechanism Report and the principles of competitive sustainability.

To watch the video, visit the [ESDN website's Spotlight](#) section.

ESDN in 2023

Things to look forward to

As 2022 draws to an end, the ESDN is already looking towards 2023 and looking forward to organizing many events throughout the year. We encourage everyone to check the [ESDN website](#) and ESDNewsletters for more information about the events happening in 2023.

The ESDN plans to organize its annual flagship Conference, at least one Workshop, and at least one Peer Learning Platform and Visit. More information on these events can be found on the ESDN website under the [Events Menu](#).

News on Sustainable Development Governance from European Countries

Belgium:

Progress made on the Flemish Voluntary Subnational Review

The VVSG (Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities) and the VVP (Association of Flemish Provinces) kicked off the development of a Voluntary Subnational Review in April this year, in order to provide timely input to the VNR that Belgium will present at the HLPF in 2023.

For the data collection and data analysis of the VSR, we work together with UNU-CRIS and working groups of local governments and provincial governments. This led to the development of an extensive SDG-index of approximately 200 indicators (which goes beyond the already existing SDG indicator sets, such as the SDG monitor (www.sdgmonitor.be) and the VVSG SDG indicator set). The index produces a graph

for each municipality, showing how they score on each SDG. The horizontal axe depicts the distance from the median score of all 300 municipalities. The vertical axe shows how the municipality does in relation to its predicted value. This predicted value takes into account contextual factors such as income level and age of inhabitants, and the city's size.

Progress made on the Voluntary National Review

The pioneer role of Flemish local and provincial governments in localizing the SDGs, together with our pro-active approach on the VSR, have contributed to the decision of the national VNR working group to include a separate chapter on SDG localization in the VNR. The 5 associations of local and provincial governments in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia work together in writing this chapter, with VVSG taking the lead. The chapter of about 10 pages describes the policy context, mechanisms and good practices in localizing the SDGs, trends and challenges in realizing the 17 SDGs, good practices on the 17 SDGs, and key messages and recommendations.

SDG project assessment tool for local governments

In December, VVSG will finalize our SDG project assessment tool for local governments. This tool is developed in cooperation with a group of local governments. For each SDG there are guiding questions which help you to determine which impact you have on that SDG (score 1 to 5). Moreover, the tool also generates a score for the principles of Leave No One Behind, multi-actor partnerships and interlinkages. The tool creates a visual presentation of the scores and provides a list with suggested actions to improve the project. The tool will most likely be translated into English in early 2023.

Ireland:

Ireland's new National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024

On the 5th October, Ireland published a new [National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022–2024](#). A [cross-government launch of the Plan](#), attended by the Prime Minister **Micheál Martin, Deputy Prime Minister Leo Varadkar and nine Government Ministers** reflected the whole-of-government approach Ireland has adopted to the implementation of the SDGs.

In Ireland, each Minister has specific responsibility for implementing individual SDG targets related to their Ministerial functions and the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications has responsibility for overseeing coherent implementation across Government.

The new plan sets out five strategic objectives and 51 actions, with 119 individual measures, to increase Ireland's ambition and strengthen implementation structures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan was developed in collaboration with all Government Departments, key stakeholders, and based on input from two public consultation processes held over the last year.

As every Government Department and Local Authority has a role in implementing the SDGs a key objective of the new National Implementation Plan is to embed the

framework provided by the 2030 Agenda into the work of national and local Government. This will ensure a coherent system-wide approach, as well as greater dialogue and joined-up thinking between policy makers across sectors to meet the Goals.

The launch of the Plan was complemented by the publication of an updated SDG Policy Map which identifies the lead Department for each of the 169 SDG targets and maps the targets against national policies.

Greater reporting mechanisms will also be put in place to monitor Ireland's progress towards achieving the SDGs and this will inform Ireland's Second Voluntary National Review which will be presented at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2023.

Expressions of Interest are now being sought for the SDG Champions Programme 2023

Ireland has opened its call for expressions of interest in the 2023 SDG Champions Programme. As part of the 2023 programme, 20 organisations and groups from across the country will be appointed 'SDG Champions' to raise public awareness of the SDGs and to demonstrate, through example, that everyone in society can make a contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

New SDG National Stakeholder Forum Committee

A new SDG National Stakeholder Forum Committee has been set up and members appointed for a 12-month period. The Committee consists of representation from a wide variety of stakeholder groups and will assist in redesigning an improved, more accessible and more inclusive SDG National Stakeholder Forum format. The next SDG National Stakeholder Forum meeting will take place in January 2023 on the principle of *Leave No One Behind.*

Germany:

"Grundsatzbeschluss": New government updates the German Sustainability Strategy and emphasises its importance

The Federal Cabinet passed a "Grundsatzbeschluss" (basic decision) on the German Sustainability Strategy (DNS) on 30th Nov.

Through the "Grundsatzbeschluss" the Federal Government reaffirms the importance of sustainable development and updates the German Sustainability Strategy (DNS) adopted by the Federal Cabinet on March 10, 2021. It acknowledges changes in objectives and key indicators based on the coalition agreement and new legislation. Moreover, the "Grundsatzbeschluss" is providing an updated outlook on activities to implement the strategy in the current legislative period. The "Grundsatzbeschluss" especially underlines the urgency of action and emphasises the importance of sustainable development as a response to the multiple crises we currently face -

climate change, species extinction and the destruction of natural ecosystems, resource consumption, increasing food insecurity, the consequences of the Corona pandemic, and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

All ministries contributed to the "Grundsatzbeschluss" within the framework of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development, chaired by Sarah Ryglewski, Minister of State to the Chancellor.

The "Grundsatzbeschluss" will be the basis for the biannually published independent evaluation report by the Federal Statistical Office on the status and trends of the key indicators of the DNS in 39 areas. The report will be issued December 2022.

The next comprehensive further development of the DNS will then take place by the end of 2024. Based on this, in 2025, the German government will submit a voluntary national report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the High-Level Political Form (HLPF) of the United Nations in New York.

More effective sustainability governance structure – start of seven transformation teams (TT)

The main responsibility for sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda stays at the Federal Chancellery. Yet, for the first time the federal cabinet has transferred the responsibility for sustainability policy to a Minister of State, Mrs. Sarah Ryglewski.

As envisaged in the coalition agreement, the German government has further developed the sustainability governance structure with the aim of making it even more effective and making it more binding.

This affects for example the work of the State Secretaries' Committee. The Committee is a strategy-forum in which central questions of sustainable development with the participation of high-ranking external experts are discussed and processed across all departments. For the next years the work of the Committee will be focused on six transformation areas identified in the DNS in 2021 where acting is especially urgent:

1. Human well-being and capabilities; social justice (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10)
2. Energy transition and climate action (SDGs 7 and 13)
3. Circular economy (SDGs 8, 9 and 12),
4. Construction and buildings, as well as the transport sector (SDGs 7, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13)
5. Sustainable agricultural and food systems (SDGs 2, 3, 12 and 15)
6. A pollutant-free environment (SDGs 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 15)

With a view to modernizing administration, the coalition agreement provides for the introduction of permanent, cross-departmental and cross-agency project teams. For this purpose, the so-called transformation teams (TT) start their work beginning of December as temporary cross-departmental project groups preparing the Committee's work on the transformation areas.

Launch of the "Gemeinschaftswerk Nachhaltigkeit" - Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform

On September 26, the [Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform](#) (German: "Gemeinschaftswerk Nachhaltigkeit") was launched during the 21st annual conference of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) in Berlin. The Joint Action for Sustainable Development is an initiative of the German Federal Government and the Länder, coordinated by RNE.

Achieving the SDGs will only be possible with a joint effort by political decision-makers and society as a whole. Therefore, the ["Gemeinschaftswerk"-platform](#) – currently available in a beta version – is designed to bring together all active players who contribute to achieving sustainable development goals in Germany: Organizations, associations, private companies, citizens, science and others.

By registering on the platform, participants introduce themselves as part of Joint Action for Sustainable Development, attract wider attention and raise awareness for the current situation. This visualization enables stakeholders to connect more easily and promote their commitment. It also motivates them and new players to commit to new sustainable activities.

Registered members can introduce themselves and find partners for joint activities and events while forging new alliances for their projects. The platform enables them to exchange best practices, share insights gained, and expand their network.

Greece:

Successfully presented its 2nd VNR at the HLP in July 2022

Greece's 2nd VNR builds on the 1st VNR presented in 2018, which covered all 17 SDGs, capturing now the most important and representative legislative and policy initiatives with regard to the SDGs taken between 2018 and now, or are in the pipeline for the immediate future.

The process for elaborating the 2nd VNR was led and coordinated by the Presidency of the Government, in particular the General Secretariat of Coordination, a new wider and more robust "center-of-government" entity set up under the Law for the "Executive State" that was enacted in 2019, to ensure alignment of policies and measures with key government priorities, as well as with the general objective for sustainable development and the dual green & digital transition as captured by key EU political initiatives and strategies like the EU Green Deal.

The drafting process was carried out in close cooperation and consultation with all line ministries, the Hellenic Statistical Authority, which is preparing a statistical review of our adjusted /revised National Indicators' List adopted already in 2019 that includes both UN and EUROSTAT SDG Indicators, and key stakeholders, including the Hellenic Parliament, regional/local authorities, social partners and civil society, guided by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Greece's 2nd VNR reflected challenges and strategies related to three crises: the aftermath of a ten-year national depression, with persisting economic and social

issues, the consecutive COVID-19 pandemic which put a significant strain on the national health system and the economy and, before this is over, the repercussions of a war outbreak within the European continent causing deep global concern.

In spite of the adversities, Greece remains fully committed to the Agenda 2030, as the essence of the SDGs is embedded in major binding political plans, while compact strategies, policies and institutional reforms promoted also aim at accelerating the full implementation of the SDGs and building back better from the pandemic.

Based on the analysis, Greece has managed to not move away from any of the 17 Goals (2021). However, SDG implementation was affected by the pandemic, although not invariably: plans to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of health services were negatively influenced, policies for clean energy advanced mostly undeterred and digitalization of public services was largely accelerated.

Several long-standing challenges are showing significant progress inter alia: poverty (SDG 1); unemployment (SDG 8); poor housing (SDG 11); income disparities (SDG 10); early school-leaving (SDG 4); female participation in senior management (SDG 5); share of RES in energy consumption (SDG 7); climate action and greenhouse gas emissions reduction (SDG 13); road accident fatalities and homicides (SDG 3). Moreover, important progress has been achieved towards the protection and support of the disadvantaged, over the last two years, with the Government endorsing a number of National Action Plans (NAPs) and Strategies that mainstream the principle of leaving no one behind in public policies and reform measures. For the first time, NAPs for youth, children's rights, child protection from sexual abuse, the rights of people with disability and those of the LGTBQI+ were launched, along with updated strategies for gender equality and Roma.

Finally, Greece has integrated the sustainability principle and the SDGs into the better regulation agenda and there is progress towards their integration in the overall financing framework for sustainable development.

In elaborating Greece's 2nd VNR Report, an important lesson learned relates to the fact that stakeholder consultations with the Government on the SDGs is not yet an established procedure. Thus, the Presidency of the Government is exploring options for setting up a permanent stakeholder consultation platform for SDGs implementation, which will facilitate a structured social dialogue in the longer-run. To this end, we are already exploring best practices and success stories from other countries.

Moreover, with regard to the related government arrangements, the Presidency of the Government is exploring ways to incorporate reporting particularly on the s in the existing detailed reporting mechanism by Ministries, in a more distinct manner with its own dedicated reporting deliverables.

For more information on Greece's 2nd VNR key messages visit here.

Greece's 2nd VNR can be found here.

Switzerland:

Toolbox Agenda 2030 for cantons and municipalities

The new Swiss online platform "Toolbox Agenda 2030 for Cantons and Municipalities" (available in German, French, and Italian) of the Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE supports cantons and municipalities in the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Based on a collection of measures and examples, it shows how various cantons and municipalities are already implementing the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As a source of information and inspiration, the toolbox aims to motivate users to also contribute to a more sustainable Switzerland. The Toolbox was developed in collaboration with experts from cantons and municipalities, the Network of Cantonal Sustainability Offices (NKNF), the Swiss Association of Municipalities (SGV) and the Swiss Association of Cities (SSV) as well as other stakeholders.

There is a short video available on Toolbox Agenda 2030 (in German, French and Italian).

New presentation of sustainable development indicators for cities and cantons

The indicator system "Cercle Indicateurs" has a new structure:

Ten topics allow easy access to the indicators. The topics reflect the interpretation of sustainable development at the level of cities and cantons. In addition, it is possible to filter by the three dimensions of sustainable development and the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

Each indicator includes two graphs on development over time and comparison with other cities or cantons, and presents the most important information for understanding and interpreting the indicator.

This new presentation is the result of a revision of the Cercle Indicateurs indicator system carried out by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) and the 29 partner cities and 19 partner cantons.

Updated indicators for the monitoring of sustainable development at national level

50 of the 104 indicators of the MONET 2030 indicator system on sustainable development have been updated to the latest data status.

Two new indicators complement the MONET 2030 indicator system:

- Hazardous chemicals (Target 12.4)
- Greenhouse gas footprint of food (target 12.2b)

Several indicators updated with 2020 data document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These include, for example, years of potential life lost (SDG 3), modal split of passenger transport (SDG 11) and greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13). Other indicators for which more recent data are available returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2021. This applies in particular to road traffic accidents (SDG 3), final energy consumption per capita (SDG 7) and congestion on Swiss motorway network (SDG 9).

News on European Governance for Sustainable Development

ICLEI – Europe:

Briefing Paper Published: "Same, Same, but Different: clarifying the relationship between Local Green Deals and Climate City Contracts as non-regulatory governance innovations

Recently, two new instruments have been introduced and formalised through established European Commission initiatives: Local Green Deals (100 Intelligent Cities Challenge) and Climate City Contracts (100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 Mission). This briefing paper clarifies the distinctions between these two instruments and provides a starting point for further discussion with all types of actors.

The Briefing Paper can be downloaded here.