

Presentation for EESC seminar reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the first EU SDS

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SDG Watch Europe

- ▶ A European cross-sectoral civil society alliance whose members are committed to ensuring that the EU & its Member States fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030

Is the current EU policy setting apt for delivering on the Agenda 2030 ?

EU adoption of SDGs in 2015- Impetus for the preparation of a new EU Sustainable Development Strategy, and a Plan of Implementation?

Three major policy documents (2014-2019) :

- ▶ (i) a Communication on '*Next steps for a sustainable European future*'
- ▶ (ii) a Reflection Paper '*Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030*'
- ▶ (iii) and for EU external action, the European Consensus on Development adopted in 2017 .
- ▶ In parallel, Eurostat upgraded its annual '*Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context*'

Commission Staff Working Document Nov 2020

Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – A comprehensive approach

Critiquing the current approach of the EU to SDG Implementation

- ▶ The EU will not succeed in implementing the ambitious, multi-dimensional and inter-linked SD agenda that is the 2030 Agenda based on a broad “mainstreaming “ approach
- ▶ This view is reinforced by the findings of any quantitative assessments that have been carried out to date of EU progress in implementing the SDGs.
- ▶ An independent assessment by The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) in Nov 2019 found that:
 - ❖ Whilst European countries lead globally on the SDGs, none are on track to achieve the Goals by 2030.
 - ❖ Countries closest to achieving the SDGs include Denmark, Sweden and Finland, whereas Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus rank last among 28 countries assessed.

Critiquing the current approach of the EU to SDG Implementation

- ❖ The EU and its member states face the greatest challenges on goals related to climate, biodiversity, and circular economy, as well as achieving the convergence in living standards, both within each country as well as across countries and regions
- ❖ The EU generates large, negative spillovers that impede other countries' ability to achieve the SDGs. The largest negative impacts are caused by unsustainable demand for agricultural, forest, and fishery products.

Critiquing the current approach of the EU to SDG Implementation

- ▶ The EU's current approach to SDG implementation lacks specific targets, a multi-year timetable or the identification of who is responsible for what – whether at EU or Member State level.
- ▶ It does not address the need for a major policy shift away from the unsustainable model of continued economic growth which has been at the heart of the policy making of the EU & its member states for some decades now.
- ▶ It has little to say about a central challenge facing the EU - of how to achieve acceptable levels of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development between its different areas of internal policy & decision-making- and between its internal and external policy -& decision -making

Critiquing the current approach of the EU to SDG Implementation

- ▶ It does not address the clear need to structure and institutionalize the involvement of different EU stakeholders in SDG monitoring & implementation
- ▶ It does little to bring clarity to the relationship between the many new and ambitious EU initiative s- from the EU Green New Deal, the Social Pillar, the EU Recovery & Resilience Facility, the The EU Climate Law, the new Industrial Strategy for Europe and others, and to help EU stakeholders to understand how each of these initiatives or frameworks relate to each other within the context of an overall SDG policy framework .
- ▶ The EU's current approach does not make it clear how EU funding and investment can be most directly related to SDG implementation across the Union so that progress in achieving the various goals and targets can be accelerated using all of the funding instruments at the Union's disposal.

Is the current EU policy setting apt to delivering on the Agenda 2030

- ▶ The EU needs to develop a new overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy and an accompanying Implementation plan to ensure the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda & its 17 SDGs
- ▶ Central coordinating strategy of the European Union- giving direction not just to its internal but also to its externally focused policy & decision-making
- ▶ “*Anything that is not sustainable development is unsustainable development*”- former EU Commissioner Potocnic

Potential benefits for the EU of developing a new overarching SDS

- ▶ EU leadership & example
- ▶ Opportunity to plan for EU recovery from the unanticipated impacts of the COVID 19 global pandemic
- ▶ Opportunity to plan the reorientation of the EU's economic paradigm
- ▶ Opportunity to promote policy coherence in the EU's SDG implementation – between internal policy & decision-making and internal & external policy & decision-making

Potential benefits for the EU of developing a new overarching SDS

- ▶ Promote a better alignment of the many new EU policy initiatives that have been developed in recent years
- ▶ Opportunity to design new EU-level governance arrangements for the achievement of the SDGs – EU institutions- EU & MS
- ▶ Institutionalise & structure multi-stakeholder involvement in EU governance
- ▶ Bring greater clarity and effectiveness to EU-level investment in, and budgeting for the implementation of the SDGs.

Thank You for your attention!

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