

**EN**

***European Economic and Social Committee***

***Sustainable Development Observatory***

Brussels, 20 May 2019

**SDO work programme/roadmap 2018–2020**

The purpose of this document is to provide a strategic framework for the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) for the next two and a half years. Its ambition is not to implement every single action listed under the different working priorities, but rather to set in motion a process that may continue after 2020.

**INTRODUCTION**

The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 represents a turning point in the way the international community has decided to tackle global issues by **bringing together economic, environmental and social dimensions in an integrated manner**. It was acknowledged that multifaceted and complex problems, such as climate change, access to clean water, urbanisation, poverty, hunger etc., could only be addressed with a holistic approach, going beyond the aim of achieving economic growth at social and environmental costs. It is becoming clearer that using GDP as the sole indicator to measure wealth has led to the development of policies that have exacerbated social inequalities and environmental degradation. The 17 SDGs and the related 230 indicators offer an opportunity to create a new narrative which would benefit all.

In this context, the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) should seize the opportunity of the 2030 SD Agenda and the international and EU commitments to implement the SDGs to promote the idea of a "**sustainable** **development**", i.e. development that creates conditions for long term prosperity giving equal importance to the three pillars: economic, social and environmental. Such sustainable development can be beneficial to civil society as a whole, including businesses (large and small), workers, consumers, farmers, NGOs, and citizens of all ages, and would therefore "leave no one behind". Sustainable development is to be seen as a way to preserve the ecosystem's capacity to deliver resources while creating jobs and new opportunities for economic returns by enabling sustainable business activities. Many advanced civil society initiatives already exist, especially at local and community level, to apply integrated sustainable development plans and projects. The majority of these projects have specific policy objectives, such as on sustainable food or mobility. The number of these initiatives is growing fast and reveals the emergence of new ways to create value across sectors, businesses, territories and people. At the same time, many business opportunities are created e.g. by the transition to a low carbon economy. Actually, businesses are also very necessary for achieving a major part of the SDGs and enabling sustainable development in general. This appetite towards new sustainable economic models is a momentum that the SDO should aim to nurture and amplify in the next 2.5 years. The SDO should call for a new type of **participatory** **governance** to allow such initiatives to thrive and be scaled up at the regional, national and European level.

The SDO work in the next mandate will be framed along the three following principles:

* A new narrative on sustainable development,
* A holistic approach in dealing with the priorities, as detailed underneath,
* The promotion of more civil society engagement in the conception and implementation of policies.

The SDO work will largely benefit from the fact that sustainable development is the number one priority of the new EESC president Luca Jahier, offering tangible opportunities to raise the visibility and political importance of the SD-related activities of the EESC in the next period.

In the medium term, the work of the SDO could be deployed with an internal and external dimension, to ensure that the ideas promoting a faster and better implementation of the SDGs are also taken up within the EESC structure. The internal measures required to promote SDG mainstreaming at the entire EESC level will be discussed among SDO members in early 2019 in order to ensure their full consistency with and endorsement by the concerned EESC bodies (including by the EESC Bureau).

**WORK PROGRAMME**

**General objective: Establish the SDGs as an overall strategy of the EU**

In its 2018-2020 mandate, the SDO will continue to push for an effective implementation of the SDGs and its corollary, the adoption of a robust and ambitious EU SD Strategy. Considerable efforts will be made to promote these two essential objectives through more collaborative working across sections, CCMI and observatories. Mainstreaming topical and important policy issues, such as poverty and inequality reduction, migration, security, trade, innovation, investment, environmental protection, in particular biodiversity, etc., through the wide spectrum of the UN 2030 Agenda will shed more light on the potential to address pressing policy issues via SD reasoning and approaches. The SDO should do so by focusing its action on areas where the EESC can meaningfully and effectively act as the voice of civil society. It should ensure that the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions are accounted in a synergetic way across the different working priorities.

**Working Priority 1: Sustainable Development Agenda ‑ calling for an overarching SD strategy for the EU**

***Context***

* Commission's Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030", expected by end 2018
* EU Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Sustainable Development
* Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe – civil society's call for a 6th Scenario focused on sustainable development
* The UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development and its annual focus on a limited set of SDGs
* EESC opinion SC/047 on The transition towards a more sustainable European future

***Proposed actions***

* At EU level, influence the EC Reflection paper through participation in the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. EESC representative to continue being proactive in the MSP
* Promote the content of the **EESC opinion on the Reflection Paper** at the institutional (with a specific focus on the new EP) and civil society level. Specific promotion approaches at EU country level
* Support non-state actors and civil society in adopting and implementing sustainable development strategies for achieving the UN 2030 Agenda
* Showcase effective SDG implementation in Europe at HLPF level each year
* Further the relationships with European networks and organisations active in the SD domain

**Working Priority 2: Monitoring of the SDGs**

***Context***

* The SD 2030 Agenda is changing perception regarding ways to monitor "development"; increased acceptance to use sets of diverse quantitative and qualitative indicators, opening new avenues to "move beyond GDP"
* 2017 EUROSTAT report "Sustainable Development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context" and 2018 Eurostat review of the SDG indicator set
* Growing recognition that without proper monitoring there cannot be proper implementation of the SDGs
* Revival of interest for the "moving beyond GDP" approach

***Proposed actions***

* Opinion NAT/737 on Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs – the civil society contribution
* EESC study on "Exposing EU policy gaps to address the Sustainable Development Goals"
* Promote the use of qualitative indicators that have been generated by civil society in policy evaluation, in order to measure progress on topical policy issues on the basis of the relevant SDGs
* Promote the development of synergies with the European Semester's monitoring process
* Continue reflection on practical ways to move beyond GDP covering economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection in an equal footing. This could take the form of an event (possibly in cooperation with the Commission) in 2019, 10 years after the EC Communication on "GDP and beyond".

**Working Priority 3: Towards more sustainable economic models**

***Context***

* Growing importance of digitalisation, and of new and emerging economic models (low-carbon, functional, circular, sharing economy)
* New patterns of social economy that are increasingly interconnecting social economy with the current economic model
* Emergence of new practical approaches to apply such models at the local and sectoral level
* Implementation of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and related legislation (e.g. Plastics Strategy, single-use plastics, monitoring framework etc.)
* European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP), a joint initiative by the EESC and the EC, and related ECESP Coordination Group's work plan
* The next Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), currently under discussion, must enable the EU to achieve its objectives and contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy by 2050
* 2017 EC Communication on Investing in a smart, innovative and sustainable industry – A renewed EU industrial policy strategy
* European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)

***Proposed actions***

* Promote concrete recommendations in relevant EESC opinions to implement new sustainable economic models
* Cooperate with the sections to mainstream social economy into current economic models
* Cooperate with the sections and the CCMI to promote EESC recommendations on a new, sustainable industrial policy strategy
* Cooperate with the sections to green the European Semester, the MFF and its individual EU financing instruments
* Promote the ECESP more systematically, especially in the context of the SDG implementation
* As part of the circular economy platform, step up momentum by applying new means to reach out to those lagging behind, e.g. through a study identifying the opportunities and challenges of specific circular economy sectors such as the fast-moving consumer industry for workers, supply chain and consumers
* Promote and create synergies across the several national, territorial and sectoral circular economy platforms that are developing across Europe. The starting point could be a specific study reviewing the existing platforms, identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation.
* Cooperate with the sections to integrateefforts to green and decarbonize the economy with social fairness and justice
* Cooperate with the Sections to promote social funding throughthe strand "social inclusion" of the upcoming "European Social Fund Plus" (ESF+)

**Working Priority 4: Climate policy – more investment and finance and engagement by non-state actors**

***Context***

* The European Commission adopted its strategy on Sustainable Finance in March 2018.
* In the field of climate finance, Europe does not have an integrated investment plan. There are minimum investment targets but no plan.
* Implementation of the Paris Agreement and growing recognition of the role of non-state actors in this process, through the so-called Talanoa Dialogue
* International Climate Governance Coalition, created in 2016 by four European organisations (EESC, CoR, Climate Chance and Comité21)
* By the first quarter of 2019, EC proposal for a Strategy for long-term (2050) EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction in accordance with the Paris Agreement, taking into account the national plans

***Proposed actions***

* Cooperate with the sections to enhance public and private investment and finances for the mitigation of and adaptation to the climate change, including the support to small scale projects by non-state actors, response to emergencies and global financing
* Prepare an opinion on the EU 2050 climate strategy and its revised energy roadmap
* Support and amplify the role of non-state actors in bridging the gap to meet the Paris Agreement, notably by exploiting the recommendations contained in the EESC study on "Boosting non-state climate action in Europe"
* Push the EC to launch a vast debate on setting up an EU policy framework to enable more and better climate actions by non-state actors
* Further the promotion of the EESC recommendations on climate justice
* Cooperation with the European Committee of the Region on TEN/660 "The effects of a new carbon-free, decentralised and digitalised energy supply structure on jobs and regional economies (own initiative opinion)"

**Working Priority 5: Food Sustainability**

***Context***

* Food sustainability is roughly addressed by the EC and across the EU through several fragmented policy areas (agriculture, environment, health, trade, development, etc.)
* However, 14 SDGs out of 17 are food-related and food sustainability is at the core of addressing many pressing challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. This reinforces the need for a comprehensive and integrated EU food policy
* Food sustainability has an exemplary role to play in demonstrating that the implementation of SDGs responds to a real need that is well understood by civil society as a whole
* Addressing food sustainability is also a means of testing the effectiveness of policy measures to change citizens'/consumers' behaviour

***Proposed actions (in collaboration with the TSG on Sustainable Food Systems)***

* Further promote at EU institutional level the EESC call for the creation of a comprehensive food policy, encompassing different policy areas and governance levels, for example by convening a meeting (in collaboration with IPES Food) of the concerned DGs and stakeholders to explore the feasibility of an EU Food Policy Council
* Prepare a new opinion on sustainable healthy diets, to be discussed at a joint TSG/SDO meeting in the context of the SDG implementation
* Promote more sustainable markets and food supply chains between tradition and innovation

**Internal strategy**

Consistently with what precedes, it would be logical for the EESC to start a process to define the best way to embed the SDGs in its entire works. For doing what it preaches, the EESC should make SDG implementation an integral part of its daily work – both in the administration and for members. The EESC could then become an example among the EU institutions on how to apply the SDGs across policies.

The SDO members will be invited to reflect on the best possible ways to integrate SDGs into the Committee's works. Some of the possible options to be explored could be of the following nature:

1. Organise a training programme on SDGs that is focused and relevant for members
2. Include a regular news item on SDGs (possibly in connection with EMAS) in the monthly newsletter for members
3. Select five specific SDGs to communicate on every year
4. Empower SDO members as "ambassadors" for sustainable development – with the EESC president acting as the top ambassador
5. Promote, on a voluntary basis, the use of an SDG checklist by rapporteurs in the preparation of their opinions in the different Sections/CCMI of the EESC. The checklist would be a practical tool to assess the extent to which an EESC opinion complies with the SDGs.
6. Look at how other cross-sectional initiatives have been implemented, for lessons learned, e.g. EMAS
7. Propose that all section presidents are officially SDO members
8. Identify two main issues per section that could be related to SDG implementation
9. Work more closely with relevant EESC bodies (e.g. the European Semester working group, the Labour Market Observatory)

These and other proposals will be discussed in an SDO meeting in early 2019 with the aim of coming up with a concrete plan of measures whenever possible.