

**SDO** | Sustainable Development Observatory

## Work Programme 2020-2023

Delivering a **European Green and Social Deal** as the EU contribution to the implementation of **Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** will be the **cornerstone of both the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (NAT) and SDO work** programmes in the 2020-2023 mandate. The European Green Deal (EGD) is an ambitious strategy for the EU to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and provide economic impetus, but the social and labour dimension should be strengthened to contribute to the SDGs more comprehensively and to ensure that no person/community/worker/ sector/region is left behind. The SDGs, the EGD and the European Pillar of Social Rights are the best blueprints we have to pave the way towards a sustainable recovery from the COVID crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a **wake-up call for change**. Implementing an agenda that **delivers socially, economically and environmentally** is more important than ever. It is clear that incremental changes will no longer be enough; we need **truly transformational shifts**. Inspiring **story-telling, broad and diverse narratives, communicating clearly why the world has to change and leading by example** will be guiding NAT and SDO work in the new mandate.

Achieving climate neutrality is the overall objective of the EGD, which resets the Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges as this generation's defining task. The European Climate Law enshrined the **2050 climate neutrality objective in legislation** and aims to ensure that **all EU policies contribute to the climate neutrality objective** and that all sectors play their part at the same time reaping the benefits for workers via more sustainable jobs and ensuring a just transition. The same approach is taken by the NAT Working Programme, which does not separate climate neutrality/climate action as a stand-alone priority, but reflects this overarching goal in all NAT priorities. Sustainable development, climate policy and climate action as well as

circular economy<sup>1</sup> have been now clearly listed as NAT competencies, which makes the link between the SDO and NAT all the more substantial.

SDO will therefore act as an enabler of these competencies to support the achievement of the overarching objective of delivering on the European Green *and Social* Deal as a means to achieving sustainable recovery and the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **The SDO will act on three levels:**

- International level: following and engaging in the international processes on Agenda 2030 and SDGs (UN High-level Political Forum – HLPF, UN General Assembly – UNGA and related events), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC negotiations and COP sessions and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as other similar relevant processes.
- EU policy level: advocating for the EGD and the various internal and external policies put the EU on the path towards achieving the SDGs.
  - exchange of experience and good practices of CSOs, sectorial and thematic organisations, regional conferences, etc.
- Internal EESC level: mainstreaming the SDGs across the EESC

#### **Working methods:**

According to the EESC Bureau note on streamlining of EESC structures, sustainable development, as a key cross-cutting issue, should be included in some way within the remits of all sections and the CCMI, in order to make clear that each section and the CCMI is responsible for sustainable development as it relates to its own remit, and is called upon to work together with the other sections in order to achieve overall sustainable development goals. The SDO should pursue its internal strategy of the past mandate to explore synergies and create links with other EESC bodies on the cross-cutting issue of sustainable development. It should continue being proactive and innovative in this respect and use the fact **that vice-presidents of sections/CCMI will in principle be SDO members in the new mandate.**




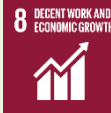


**New working methods** will be explored to ensure that we use our individual strengths to achieve better results in the new mandate. The SDO president, its vice-presidents and all members, as well as the secretariat have different but crucial roles to play in co-designing and co-creating the SDO activities. Improving the impact and coherence of the EESC messages on sustainability is an important challenge. The SDO and its members will **continue engaging on social media** (Twitter, Instagram) on relevant occasions (once a month) and be the **story-tellers of the strong narrative on**

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<sup>1</sup> EESC opinions on sustainable development/climate - building blocks from previous mandate: NAT/760 on the [Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe"](#), NAT/765 on [The sustainable economy we need](#), SC/53 on [Leaving no one behind when implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda](#), NAT/784 on [European Climate Law](#), NAT/785 on [European Climate Pact](#), NAT/788 on [Towards structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making process](#), NAT/789 on [Towards an EU strategy on sustainable consumption](#), NAT/794 on [Digitalisation and Sustainability – status quo and need for action in civil society perspective](#).

**sustainable development.** The SDO will also **walk the talk on sustainable working methods** via continued cooperation with EMAS (plastic-free, food waste reduction, soft mobility, sustainable sourcing, climate-neutrality, etc.), optimising use of digital tools, webinars, etc., and making events more inclusive (gender balance, youth participation, go beyond the "Brussels bubble," etc.). It will **continue inviting EMAS to SDO meetings** to report on progress towards achievement of EGD objectives at the EESC level.

## Proposed priorities for the Sustainable Development Observatory

Accelerating the implementation of SDGs	Towards climate neutrality	Sustainable recovery and transition
 		  
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calling for an overarching EU strategy</b></li> <li>• <b>Governance – fostering "whole of society approach"</b></li> <li>• <b>Monitoring of the SDG implementation/indicators</b></li> <li>• <b>Mainstreaming the SDGs across the EESC</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen and CSO participation in climate action</li> <li>• Enhancing international ambition and cooperation</li> <li>• Ensuring that the EU is on track to meet its ambitious climate goal</li> <li>• Making the EESC climate neutral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability of the post-COVID recovery</li> <li>• Just transition that leaves no one behind</li> <li>• Circular economy and new economic models</li> <li>• Wellbeing economy for people and planet</li> </ul>

### Proposed actions under each priority:

#### 1. *Accelerating the implementation of SDGs*

##### a. **Calling for an overarching EU strategy**

- i. Keep SDGs high on the agenda of the EU institutions; the EGD does not replace Agenda 2030 (SDGs were not even mentioned in the SOTEU...) and the SDGs should remain our compass;
- ii. Keep calling for an overarching SD strategy at EU level; urge for structured and meaningful civil society participation in SDG implementation;
- iii. Call on the Commission to present "Voluntary Regional Reviews" at HLPF in close consultation with civil society; actively participate in annual HLPFs, etc.;
- iv. Foster the SDG Agenda within the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS).

##### b. **Governance – fostering "whole of society approach"**

- i. Call on the Commission to revive and upgrade a Multi Stakeholder Platform on the SDGs as an interinstitutional consultation framework (NAT/760);
- ii. Keep highlighting the important role and action of local, sustainable communities in the implementation of the SDGs; the EU should foster and facilitate bottom-up approaches and solutions – follow-up "Communities for Future";

- iii. Ensure civil society's structured participation in the development of recovery plans, in particular as far as the sustainability/EGD dimension is concerned (see below).
  - c. **Monitoring of the SDG implementation/indicators**
    - i. Ensure a meaningful SDG monitoring and reporting cycle at EU level – cooperation with SDSN and IEEP for annual Europe SD Reports, and with other civil society organisations (CSOs) – convene a meeting in early 2021.
  - d. **Mainstreaming the SDGs across the EESC**
    - i. Establish a structured cooperation between the three EESC observatories:
      1. plenary coordination meeting of the three EESC observatories (Labour Market observatory, the Digital Transition and Single Market observatory and the Sustainable Development observatory) as a regular and mandatory meeting at least once at each half of the mandate;
      2. Regular (once a year?) coordination working meetings of the presidencies of the three observatories (presidents and vice-presidents) with presence of the presidents of relative sections;
      3. One theme to be considered jointly by the three observatories could be for example on the "Decade of Action on SDGs in the EU in a context of post-COVID". An interesting follow up of this event could be a possible joint study.
    - ii. Work on the Semester process with ECO and the Semester Group – foster messages on wellbeing economy and alternative indicators to GDP; the ESG will probably have a major role on the follow-up of the Guidance to Member States' Recovery and Resilience Plans.
    - iii. In line with c.i. above, promote a structured participation of the EESC to the SDGs monitoring, for example by doing internal consultation to the different EESC sections, observatories and CCMI to strengthen/improve indicators related with the SDG Index and Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

## **2. Towards climate neutrality**

- a. **Citizen and CSO participation in climate action**
  - i. Organise an event to maintain momentum towards COP26 (November 2021) and to focus on operationalising the Climate Pact and the demands of the EESC Opinion NAT/785;
  - ii. Following from that, engage in conversations with the Institutions and external stakeholder to create the Climate Pact Stakeholder Platform. This could also be linked potentially with the Conference on the Future of Europe, in particular in terms of organising a citizens' assembly to be hosted by the EESC;

- iii. Promote the intergeneration aspects of climate justice and amplify the voices of young people and their organisations – set up, operationalise and implement ideas of the Youth Climate and Sustainability Roundtables (in line with Opinion NAT/788);
  - iv. Follow-up on the work on climate justice and all its dimensions, with particular focus on women and climate change.
- b. Enhancing international ambition and cooperation**
- i. Continue engaging at the international level, in particular via the visibility at COPs;
  - ii. Advocate for more space and exchanges with non-Party stakeholders;
  - iii. Contribute to the Global Climate Action Agenda;
  - iv. UN Climate Actions for jobs initiative.
- c. Ensuring that the EU is on track to meet its ambitious climate goal**
- i. Address the relevant revisions of EU climate legislation in 2021;
  - ii. New EU strategy on adaptation to climate change.
- d. Making the EESC climate neutral**
- i. Coordination of the dossiers linked with the European Green Deal: a support team at administrative level already exists and exchanges information that was also shared with section presidents and rapporteurs of opinions;
  - ii. Support EMAS to foster priority actions to reduce carbon emissions in 2021-2030;
  - iii. Hold all NAT SG meetings and NAT/SDO hearings 100% virtually.

### **3. Sustainable recovery and transition**

- a. Sustainability of the post-COVID recovery**
- i. Contribute to the NAT/SDO study on "Shifting priorities in post-COVID recovery" and follow-up;
  - ii. Follow-up of Opinion NAT/789 on sustainable consumption;
  - iii. Promote a joint study/opinion with the ESG on the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021 that contains the strategic guidance for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which is the key recovery instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU.
- b. Just transition that leaves no one behind**
- i. Follow-up of Opinion SC/53 Leaving no one behind;
  - ii. Particular emphasis on young people and intergenerational justice;
  - iii. Particular emphasis on SDG5 – gender equality.

- c. Circular economy and new economic models**
    - i. Continue and enhance the activity of ECESP;
    - ii. Work closely with the two observatories on Labour Market and on Digital Transition and Single Market – organise a joint meeting on economic models;
    - iii. Promote sustainable industry policy through better cooperation with the two observatories/CCMI, etc.
  
  - d. Wellbeing economy for people and planet**
    - i. Follow-up to the Opinion NAT/765 on the Sustainable economy we need;
    - ii. Pursue the work on beyond GDP, cooperation with OECD and CSOs and civil society coalitions;
    - iii. Study on mega-trends as digitalisation and scarce resources, or de-carbonisation of the economy and sustainable management of raw materials.
  
  - e. Internal EESC dialogue on sustainable recovery and transition**
    - i. A structured and regular work with the European Semester Group (ESG) of the section for the Economic and Monetary Union, Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO);
    - ii. Cooperation with CCMI on the follow up to the New Industrial Strategy;
    - iii. Cooperation with the REX section on the Trade Agreements in the context of SDGs (i.e. Mercosur agreement);
    - iv. Cooperate with the REX and ECO sections on the economic framework and the carbon border tax.
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