

Online Stakeholder Consultation on Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

Participants: 108

Speakers:

- Ricardo Rio, Mayor of Braga and Rapporteur of the COR
- Marsha Smirnova, Eurocities
- Jan Noterdaeme, CSR Europe
- Ingeborg Niestroy, SDG Watch
- Rebecca Humphries, WWF
- Stefano Marta, OECD

Interventions:

- Anton Nilsson, Representative of the Government of Åland in Brussels
- Estibaliz Urcelay, Foreign Affairs Officer of the Basque Government
- Bentz Sarah, Council of European Municipalities and Regions and PLATFORMA
- Rodolphe Sequeira, Engineer
- Andres Jaadla, COR member, Estonia
- Susan Runsten, Sweden Regional Government
- Dominika Lange, COGEN Europe

Ricard Rio: Using the SDGs is very important to give coherence to the policy targets that we have for the future both at the European and local level. In recent years the SDGs narrative has weakened a bit at the EC level. We value the importance of the local and regional dimension of SDGs with the involvement of local and regional authorities. 65% SDGs would not be achieved without the involvement of local and regional governments.

Marsha Smirnova: It is important to acknowledge that regions and cities have been affected by the pandemic and have showed their key role in responding to the emergency, enhancing the capacity of the health sector and strengthening social support for their communities. The network of Eurocities supported its members. Local level solidarity has been important to support people in those difficulties. Cities have been leading the way with policy choices, options to reinforce community centers, health capacity, fight climate change, give priorities to short supply chains and so on. Cities are aligning to both the SDGs and the priorities of the European Green deal. The lack of involvement of local institutions and the lack of consultation process in the NRPs is risking to block and delay the transformation, leaving large parts of population behind. There is a clear urgency to localize the SDGs and assist the transformation towards sustainable development, build back better and build back fairer. The main tool we have for the implementation of RRF and SDGs is the ES. Agenda 2030 missed the opportunity to be relevant at the EU level. We are very willing to work together and show that the SDGs are implemented at the local level and we are able to accelerate the process and galvanize the systemic

change, mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic, tackle climate change and build back for a sustainable future.

Jan Noterdaeme: Our biggest concern at CSR is the lack of impact when it comes to the role of industries and sectors for the realization of SDGs. Industries are transforming their business models across their supply chains, we need to increase their relevance, support this changes and we need them to become leaders of sustainability. We have been inaugurating the European Pact for Sustainable industry incubated in the European SDGs platform. We need to accelerate a culture of collaboration across all sectors and levels. We want to establish a collaborative model. We want to measure if industries are equipped for sustainability. We worry that we do not see as much energy when it comes to impact-oriented actions. We need provisions to accompany businesses in their due diligence duties, a lot of work is being done but if we want to be credible we need to work to support local collaborations in places where companies are sourcing from. We lose track of the real end goal, which is improving the livelihoods of thousands of small farmers and producers. We need a more integrated and ambitious approach.

Ingeborg Niestroy: At member states level there are obstacles to integrate the SDGs in the ES. The sub-national levels of government need to showcase how the integration and horizontal coordination on SDGs can be achieved. SDG watch is a multi-level civil society coalition. We report and try to improve SDGs monitoring, because the Eurostat reporting is not participatory enough. We produced a report to show the deficits and gaps of the Eurostat monitoring model and the way of measuring progresses. Monitoring has to be a participatory process. We need a multi-stakeholders approach.

The ES cycle: there are classical milestones like the SDGs forum. The Annual Growth Survey should be a sustainability survey but the participatory aspect has been neglected by Eurostat.

Member states are reluctant to link the SDGs to the ES cycle, because the ES is dealt with by the economic and finance ministries who have little interest to prioritize the full integration of the SDGs in their plans. The plan for Recovery should have sustainability at its core, but it is difficult even for countries who have established beautiful sustainability strategies of their own. This is also reflected in the European Council working party for sustainable development under the German presidency. We have lost the multi-stakeholders platform on SDGs. It was replaced by the European Climate Pact but it deals with climate alone. The Climate Pact only have functions at the action-oriented level. The EC is focused on speed and getting things done, but we want to propose a real participatory monitoring, with imputes from civil society and the subnational levels of governance.

Rebecca Humphries: The EC is sidelining the SDGs and this is a pity because they can help address so many issues and challenges that we are facing in a very integrated way, such as biodiversity loss linked with consumption patterns and agricultural practices. Looking at "EC Staff Working Document Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals" the EU is not going far enough. The document is more a repetition of existing initiatives than a forward-looking agenda. President VDL will now take responsibility for coordinated action for SDGs implementation. It was not really clear before who was coordinating and taking the lead. A whole government approach requires coordinated action across the Commission, but we have no details on how this will be put in practice and the document does not provide details. We would like to see a demonstration that SDGs have been implemented through policies and that there is coherence at the commission level for sustainable development. There should be a demonstration by aligning the annual EU programming and the commission working program should reflect how the EU is implementing the SDGs. The President of the EC should take notes of the

Eurostat report publicly because the EU is not going far enough to reach the SDGs. The annual EC work program could reflect how the Commission intends to address the SDGs in collaboration and consultation with other EU institutions such as the COR. Policy coherence is key to ensure the coordination of policies to realize the SDGs. For example, the Common Agricultural Policy works mostly in the opposite direction to sustainable farming practices such as the Farm to Fork initiative. We need to go to the heart of EU policy, that must prioritize SDGs at every stage of the policy process and Sustainable Development should be considered when there is an impact assessment. Environmental impact assessments of policy proposals are not compulsory. For instance, there is increasing awareness of the negative impact of digital expansion on greenhouse gas emission.

SDGs platform: WWF was a member and we regret that the EC has not renewed it. Without a structured dialogue is difficult for civil society to have a transparent dialogue with the commission.

Stefano Marta: We organize the OECD round table on the role of SDGs for cities and regions. SDGs are both timely relevant, as they provide a long term plan to envision a sustainable recovery. SDGs have never been so timely and relevant to help cities and regions to recover from Covid-19 pandemic. We have been working with 11 cities supporting the improvement of local development policies and strategy.

Three key elements:

1. SDGs are a shared responsibility across all levels of governments. We see that more and more national governments use the SDGs to improve multi-lateral governance.
2. We need to go local in the measuring of the progress of SDGs. We help cities and regions to monitor their progress to reach SDGs. Some of the biggest gaps are on climate-related SDGs
3. SDGs are important as a compliance agenda but they provide an opportunity to break the silos and work across levels of government with the private sector and civil society.

OECD launched a report with five key areas of recommendations to localize the SDGs.

The web tool is supporting OECD countries to localize the SDGS.

All members of OECD will gather virtually in Paris to discuss their progresses on SDGs. SDGs are very high in the OECD agenda. And we will continue this work.

Anton Nilsson: In 2014 our government adopted a SDGs plan. A grassroots network was opened for cities and regions who joined to set the goals of this agenda for the realization of SDGs. We celebrate 100 years of our autonomy. We created our own version of 7 unique goals. The agenda is integrated every year in the budget of our government. We make impact assessments to see how we are doing. We received the EC European Sustainability Award. The lesson we learned is that the Agenda 2030 is a good framework, but each local community must see what is in there for them and how it can be adapted to their situation. SDGs and the recovery should go hand in hand. It is paramount. The money from the recovery fund must go into sustainable actions and policies. We have to make sure that societies can relate to the SDGs at the local level.

Estibaliz Urcelay: Creating alliances with other stakeholders is important to have political will to work towards the SDGs. In our government we worked for the SDGs and we presented our agenda of commitment after a public consultation. In 2020 there was a new legislation in the Basque countries to work on SDGs. We have a secretariat which coordinates work on SDGs and creates stability on this matter. We have taken note of the UN recommendations. This engagement for SDGs meant reports and intergovernmental works at different level and this has been recognized by the EC and the OECD as an

example of good practice. The Basque government's priority focuses on 4 pillars, on social aspects, multi-level partnership, connection and proactivity.

The pandemic highlighted inequalities we need to address. Our government has key competences and it is ready to work on SDGs towards 2030.

Some suggestions: we need more representative participation. We need active participation to work better towards 2030. More communication at the international level working towards 2030. Multilateral governance is also key. We need local and regional reports on the progresses. These reports encourage us and help us transform our policy.

Bentz Sarah: SDGs are brought to life and actually implemented by local and regional governments every day. In our study on the localization across SDGs we noted that there is a real increase in the level of awareness on SDGs at the local level. This calls for a better monitoring of spillover effects between different policies at different levels of governments.

National associations try to connect the dots from the local, national, European and international level. A lot of EU cities are doing their best to produce reports both for the EU and UN. The EU could encourage cities to share their work and to partner together towards the goals. We believe that the "EC Staff Working Document Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals" acknowledges local and regional governments' active contribution to the SDGs and this is a good sign.

We regret the suppression of the multi-stakeholders' platform. We hope that in any upcoming proposal of the commission for the SDGs local and regional governments will be included and acknowledged as state actors able to design and implement policies for SDGs.

Rodolphe Sequeira: The introduction of 5G is against the SDGs. It consumes 150% more than optic fibers (Data from environmental agency in Germany). It also reduces privacy rights. We lose the chance to build a sustainable digital single market in Europe.

Andres Jaadla: The most important question about SDGs is the implementation at the local level. We recognize the importance of SDGs but how can we as local authorities implement them and have an impact? EU green deal is weakening the attention towards SDGs. We have to support the UN SDGs and be clear about their implementation at the local and regional level.

Susan Runsten: SDGs have helped us to identify the social economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and their interconnections and interrelations. We see conflicts among goals when it comes to industrial development. It is a challenge to formulate strategies and actions that take these conflicts into consideration and help overcome them.

Dominika Lange: We welcome the integration of SDGs in the European Green Deal and the ES. It is important to foster affordable and sustainable energy for SDGs. It is crucial when we think about cities and regions and their energy system resilience. When it comes to the European Green Deal energy efficiency is crucial to reach the goal. The engagement of industries should also be kept in mind. We are fully committed to these objectives.

Ricardo Rio: In conclusion we hope to build strong relations to collaborate and strengthen our impact at the EU level for the SDGs.