



EUROPEAN UNION



Europe moving towards a sustainable future

Contribution of the SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform to the Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030" October 2018



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A blue ink signature of Frans Timmermans.



A blue ink signature of Jyrki Katainen.

With other world leaders, the European Union agreed at the United Nations in September 2015 on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda provides a roadmap for dignity, peace and prosperity for people and the planet. It addresses the most pressing global challenges of our time and jointly commits us to achieving 17 universal Sustainable Development Goals.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is a shared responsibility and requires a change in thinking, not only by public authorities, but also by other stakeholders including citizens. It is a challenge but also a great opportunity to craft a brighter future for all within our planet's limits. We need to learn from each other and work better together to accelerate progress in reaching those who are left behind and decoupling economic development from environmental degradation.

This is why in 2017 the European Commission set up the high-level multi-stakeholder platform to play a role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals alongside Member States and the European institutions.

The members of the platform, representing diverse interests and sectors, have now presented a common set of recommendations for a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This is a remarkable contribution, which the European Commission is grateful for.

The report is not an end in itself. It is part of a collaborative process. Through a continued push from citizens, policymakers, the private sector, civil society, social partners and academia, we will jointly build a sustainable future for Europe.

The Commission's multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals has demonstrated that we can reconcile diverse opinions, learn from each other, and jointly develop practical ideas and solutions for the wellbeing of our present and future generations.

Letter by the members of the platform

Brussels, 11 October 2018

*To the present and future leaders of the European Commission and other EU Institutions,
To all players having a strong stake in people's sustainable living, and in the environmental, social,
economic and governance developments of Europe,
To the people and voters in Europe,*

*Through this new Platform and with our Report, we want to send a **vibrant signal** to the leaders, actors and people within and outside the European Union: time has come – more than ever – to develop and implement a visionary and ambitious **Strategy for a Sustainable Europe 2030**.*

*It is important to note that none of the members of the Platform is expected to endorse every recommendation or view entailed in this Report and **each has the right to take a different view on the issues covered**.*

*However, within a short period of time, we have strived to build upon and respect our diverse backgrounds and opinions, with the aim of **pulling in the same direction for a better, sustainable Europe**.*

*Through strong **common values, structural policy improvements and innovative action proposals**, we ground our recommendations in the experience and efforts of thousands of men and women in the public sector, civil society and private sector. They have a common ambition to transform the Sustainable Development Goals into practical solutions for the well-being of citizens and the protection of our environment for present and future generations.*

*Our report highlights **different perspectives and addresses some challenging trade-offs** between the environmental, economic, social and governance dimensions of sustainable development, some of which we have been able to negotiate, others which need more clarification and consensus-building.*

*We are confident that the **trust and engagement of people** and leaders in a continuous transformation of Europe will bear fruit. It requires a fair and equitable culture of dialogue and partnership on all levels, in which each partner can become, and trust the others to be, **co-designers of a Europe that cares and works for all**. It also involves an overarching strategy for a Sustainable Europe to guide all European policies and programmes that will accelerate our individual and collective endowments in order to yield sustainable security, prosperity and dignity for all.*

*We are proud of the work achieved so far, while at the same time we feel the **urgency to do much more**. So, might the sustainability dialogue and collaboration within this Platform - both between the stakeholders and with the EU institutions – rapidly improve and grow.*

MARTIN HARPER
Birdlife



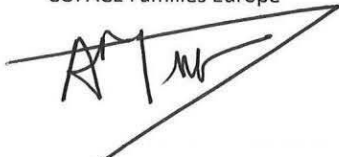
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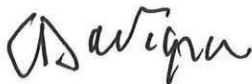
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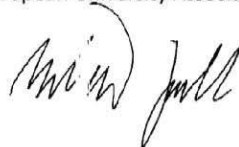
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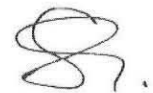
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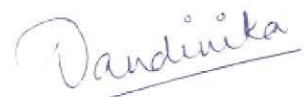
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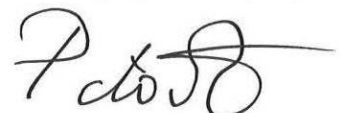


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Executive Summary

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Union – the "EU SDG multi-stakeholder platform" – was established in May 2017 to support and advise the European Commission and all stakeholders involved on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level.

Through strong common values we, as representatives of the public sector, civil society and private sector, worked diligently to make well considered recommendations on how to transform the Sustainable Development Goals into practical solutions for the wellbeing of our present and future generations in the EU and beyond. Our recommendations aim to inspire and guide the Commission's Reflection paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030".

Given the ambitious agenda and the universal and indivisible nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is no single recipe for which to advocate. Achieving the Goals requires a comprehensive review, the identification of areas where changes are needed, and the development of coherent policies which produce lasting social, economic, governance and environmental co-benefits, recognising and acting on interlinkages between all goals and targets. Our recommendations provide an ambitious and consensus-based contribution to this goal.

As priority actions, we recommend that the EU develops and implements an overarching visionary and transformative Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy, guiding all EU policies and programmes. To be effective, such a strategy should include both interim and long-term targets and lay out Europe's vision for a sustainable Europe beyond the 2030 Agenda.

When implementing the 2030 Agenda, the European Commission and all other stakeholders need to **respect key principles**, to fulfil existing commitments under international agreements, to commit to a transformation of our social and economic model, to prioritise and fast-track actions for the poorest and most marginalised in society ("leave no one behind"), to recognise planetary boundaries, to respect human rights and the rule of law, and ensure policy coherence for sustainable development.

We also make some cross-cutting recommendations. We advise the EU to reinvent its governance system to ensure a coherent approach to sustainable development. The Commission President, assisted by a dedicated project team, should be in charge of the 2030 Agenda, ensure effective coordination and report on its implementation during the annual State of the European Union speech. We also will need action of regions, cities, citizens, communities, businesses and civil society in its diversity to implement the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. The EU should advocate a territorial approach for the delivery of the SDGs and allow a two-way dialogue where European and national strategies associate regional and local authorities as well as civil society and professional organisations in a multi-level and multi-stakeholders governance approach. We also offer to assess the merits of this Platform - both its composition and mission - and to discuss how in the future it can best contribute to our proposal for an inclusive, participatory and transparent Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy. Finally, additional efforts should be deployed to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, meaning that all EU policies should contribute to sustainable development within or outside Europe.

We also have some specific recommendations on how to strengthen the EU's existing toolbox. The Better Regulation agenda could become more powerful by fully integrating sustainable development

objectives and principles in the policy-making process. EU policy-makers should better use and further improve the Impact Assessment Guidelines to mainstream sustainable development. A Sustainable Europe coordination cycle should be set up, with EU Sustainable Development Action Plans, Member State and European Commission Sustainable Development Reports and recommendations. The European Semester process should be guided by the Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy and include a sustainability check. EU public finances, including the Multi-annual Financial Framework, should be fully sustainable and the definition of environmental, social and governance risks embedded within financial regulations. Sustainable fiscal reforms should be carried out at Member State level, corporate tax avoidance and fiscal dumping addressed and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda fully implemented. To inform future decision makers, the EU should further develop an integrated and participatory monitoring, accountability and review framework, including a comprehensive EU SDG indicator set and qualitative analysis.

We also make sectoral specific recommendations. Sustainability should be reflected in a coherent way across all EU policies and initiatives. For the scope of this paper, however, we identified five EU policy areas with a vital role in achieving the SDGs:

- (1) ***Sustainable Consumption and Production*** should be further promoted, incentivised and regulated while paying particular attention to global supply chains. We also need legal, policy and financing measures that should drive this transition. The EU's footprint needs to be reduced, a Resource Management Convention introduced and consumption based indicators developed. Sustainability should be part of the European Industry Strategy 2030.
- (2) The EU should ***invest in research and innovation, people and human talents, employability and social inclusion***. The European Pillar of Social Rights should be fully implemented. The social and solidarity economy should be promoted; investment in health and well-being scaled up and sustainability should become an interdisciplinary science. Quality education should be guaranteed, support to children and young people prioritised and a regulatory framework to ensure safe pathways for asylum seekers and migrants introduced, while strengthening integration and inclusion policy.
- (3) ***Climate and energy policy***. The EU should align its climate and energy targets with the agreed objective of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees compared to pre-industrial levels, while increasing resilience. Fossil fuels should be progressively phased out; investments in energy efficiency and clean energy increase; the uptake of nature based solutions promoted. Traffic congestion should decrease, sustainable infrastructure and comprehensive mobility plans should be encouraged. The EU should also support developing countries in adaptation and resilience to climate change.
- (4) ***Food, farming and land-use including Common Agricultural Policy***. The EU should ensure that all EU investment into agriculture is aligned with the EU's Treaty to ensure a high level of human health protection, food security, as well as the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. Public income support should support food production, the provision of public goods and ecosystem services, while also ensuring a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, and enabling the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems. Investments and research into environmentally friendly and economically viable practices should be prioritised and global value chains made sustainable.

(5) **Cohesion policy** is a major EU investment tool to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It should strengthen the localisation of the Goals by directly supporting subnational governments, support the Urban Agenda of the EU, further promote social objectives and better encourage investments towards greener, more sustainable infrastructure, including in rural areas.

To address the urgency of action, we strongly encourage the Commission to follow up on our recommendations in a swift and timely manner so that Europe can fully and rapidly embrace the opportunity that sustainable development represents to our societies. The implementation of our requirements will require an inclusive and participatory approach and we fully commit our support. Our ultimate objective is to ensure that sustainable development becomes a permanent feature of European policy-making.

Chapter I - Vision and long-term Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy

When adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the international community pledged to eradicate poverty and share prosperity, to leave no-one behind, and to heal and secure our planet by transforming our societies and economies in order to stay within our planetary boundaries. It promised to take urgently needed, bold and transformative steps to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. To achieve these ambitious objectives by 2030, it is high time for the European Union (EU), its Member States, regions and municipalities, and all concerned stakeholders to move from commitment to immediate action, especially given that implementation of the 2030 Agenda should have started right after its adoption in September 2015.

At European level, it is imperative to develop and implement a *Sustainable Europe 2030* strategy, an overarching strategy to succeed the EU2020 strategy, with both interim and long-term targets and timelines over and above short political cycles, laying out Europe's vision of a sustainable future until and beyond Agenda 2030. The strategy must be a driver for policy coherence for sustainable development so that the EU can deliver the economic, social and environmental transformations needed to achieve the SDGs. The *Sustainable Europe 2030* strategy must also become an integral part of the debate on the Future of Europe.

a. EUROPE: A KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTOR FACING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, while giving priority to the essential needs of the most deprived and respecting the limitations set by the carrying capacity of the planet.¹

Over the years, Europe has advanced towards more sustainability in certain areas due to measures taken by individuals, civil society organisations, enterprises, as well as at all levels of government. Across the EU, we have adopted some of the world's highest social and environmental standards. New business models show the way towards a sustainable economy. We have the capacity to turn the path towards the achievement of the SDGs into an opportunity to establish well-being for all within planetary boundaries. It is all the more vital that public institutions, private business and civil society build stronger statesmanship, leadership, and entrepreneurship and dare to explore new and unprecedented partnerships in order to transform governance and business models.

The SDGs must become the compass for our economies and financial markets. By embracing the SDGs, businesses can reignite their leadership in innovation and competitiveness while respecting human rights and making supply chains fair, by taking better care of their staff, and investing in

¹ *Our Common Future*, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, transmitted to the General Assembly as an Annex to [document A/42/427](#). See Chapter 2 "Towards Sustainable Development".

lifelong learning and wellbeing, by managing risks, anticipating citizen and consumer demand, and opening up new opportunities. In 2017, the Business & Sustainable Development Commission's report *Better Business, Better World* estimated a global economic opportunity of EUR 10 trillion that could be seized every year if the SDGs were achieved by 2030 – and much more if we take into account environmental and health costs that we can avoid through sustainable practices. The Commission has also predicted that this could create 380 million new jobs globally.² To capture these opportunities, enterprises and investors need to avidly pursue social and environmental sustainability.

However, despite all efforts and progress made and despite our region's prosperity, Europe faces considerable challenges on its path of sustainable development. Some of the most urgent challenges are as follows:

- The EU has experienced a **serious backlash in some Members States concerning the rule of law and democracy, and adequate space for civil society and human rights, in particular women's rights and the human rights of migrants and refugees**. This has hampered our capacity for a coordinated policy response as well as the capacity of civil society to engage constructively in the governance process.
- Different forms of **inequality across the EU and Member States have stagnated or increased** over the past years. The OECD warns that the increasing socio-economic divide in Europe over the past decades harms our societies in many ways such as hampering social cohesion, lost opportunities for many and worse health outcomes.³ Amongst the different forms of inequality that persist or have even increased, the OECD lists increasing income inequality, the unequal distribution of wealth, the persisting gender pay gap and disadvantages for women in terms of the type of jobs and occupation they hold, have, significantly lower life expectancy for people from less educated backgrounds (in particular for men) or the persistent disadvantages faced by native born children of immigrants with a 50% higher unemployment rate than amongst young people with native born parents.⁴ According to Eurostat, with 118 million people at a persisting risk of poverty and social exclusion, 23.5% of the European population experience at least one of three forms of poverty – monetary poverty, severe material deprivation or living in a household with very low work intensity. The number of people at risk of poverty is still higher than in 2008 and – despite large disparities between and within Member States – also affects the strong economies (Germany: approx. 20% and no tangible improvement since 2008).⁵ In-work poverty is a critical problem in many Member States.⁶ Extreme forms of poverty persist: homelessness has been increasing in all EU Member States except for Finland⁷ while housing costs keep soaring, affecting mainly the poorest households. Young people are the age group at the highest

² Business and Sustainable Development Commission (2017), *Better Business, Better World*.

³ OECD (2017) *Understanding the socio-economic divide in Europe*, p. 5.

⁴ OECD (2017), *Understanding the socio-economic divide in Europe*, p. 5. Ibid, page 6.

⁵ Eurostat (2017), *Sustainable development in the European Union. Monitoring Report on Progress towards the SDGs in an EU Context*.

Eurostat (2018) *Smarter, greener, more inclusive ? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy* .

⁶ Eurofound report (2017), *In-work poverty in the EU*.

⁷ FEANTSA (2018), *Third overview of housing exclusion in Europe*.

risk of poverty or social exclusion⁸. Many Europeans suffer from unequal access to quality education, health care and social protection. In the EU, persons with disabilities often suffer from little access to basic products and services such as banking and transportation, and 30% of them live in poverty⁹.

- Despite the recent economic recovery, Europe continues to face many challenges in ensuring sustainable economic progress and the sustainability of our social systems. While the **unemployment** rate across the EU has decreased, it continues to be at an unacceptably high level in many parts of the Union, in particular youth employment, and unemployment is very unevenly spread across the region. Whilst it is positive that we are living longer, **demographic change** and the ageing population combined with unemployment, more diversity on forms of work, skills mismatches and a labour market that needs to adapt to contemporary society mean that our social systems are facing increasing and complex demands. We need to ensure that our social protection systems, including healthcare and pensions systems, provide adequately for future generations in an economically sustainable way.
- **Women and girls** often do not achieve their full potential. The gender employment gap is decreasing and the female employment rate reached an all-time high. However, the gender pay gap persists with women's gross hourly earnings on average 16.2 % below those of men in the EU and it is higher in the private sector when compared to the public sector (e.g. Germany: gender pay gap in the private sector: 24.0 %).¹⁰ It is a consequence of segregation in education, training and occupations, notably in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and highly paid disciplines and professions.¹¹ 80% of care work in Europe falls on family carers, mostly women, who are left with few or inadequate financial compensation, recognition or old age insurance¹².
- Many people within Europe continue to be **excluded from quality education**, which leads to the reproduction of patterns of exclusion and marginalisation.¹³ Moreover, too many education systems are still underfunded and unable to equip people with the competences, knowledge and skills needed to contribute to sustainable development, to increase social well-being and democratic participation in society, as well as to foster economic prosperity.
- **Healthcare systems are facing increasing and complex demands** with persistent inequities that undermine the EU's fundamental values and patients' rights and impact social cohesion. Public

⁸ See IMF *Inequality and poverty across generations in the European Union*, 2018 (p. 6): "Today, the young [defined here as 18-24] are the age group most likely to be poor - in both relative and absolute terms"; as well as Eurostat "Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion": "31.3% of young people aged 18 to 24 and 26.9% of those aged less than 18 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015 [...]. Moreover, the situation of young people aged 18 to 24 has deteriorated the most since 2010 compared to other age groups."

⁹ European Commission (2017) *Progress Report on the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, p. 6.

¹⁰ See Eurostat "Gender Pay Gap Statistics" available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics.

¹¹ See both Eurostat (2017) and OECD (2017).

¹² COFACE Families Europe (2017) *Study on the challenges and needs of family carers in Europe* available at <http://www.coface-eu.org/resources/publications/study-challenges-and-needs-of-family-carers-in-europe/>

¹³ See OECD (2017).

bodies remain insufficiently focused on improving well-being and preventing diseases, missing out on the human and economic co-benefits of adopting evidence-based public health measures¹⁴. The burden of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** continues to weigh heavily on people's well-being and the EU economy. EU countries spend nearly 10% of GDP on healthcare, with up to 80% of this spending going towards the treatment of NCDs. Europe suffers some of the world's **highest levels of premature mortality and economic burden from preventable chronic diseases** related to poor diet, harmful use of alcohol and tobacco, lack of physical activity, air pollution and mental disorders, including stress.

- The EU **lacks a solidarity mechanism** to ease the pressure on Member States receiving disproportionate numbers of asylum claims. It **requires a comprehensive framework to ensure safe and legal pathways for refugees and migrants** in line with international obligations. Once arrived, refugees and migrants need to receive more support to integrate effectively into our societies and avoiding discrimination.
- Rising or persisting inequalities and the perception that our public institutions are not serving the public interest have led to a **loss of trust among citizens** in government, the political establishment, and the EU and its governance structures, as well as other institutions.
- Despite the efforts that have been undertaken and the improvements achieved, Europe and the rest of the world are faced with **various ecological crises**. In November 2017, the Union of Concerned Scientists mobilised more than 15 000 scientists, including the majority of living Nobel price laureates, to send a warning to humanity: since 1992, when the first similar warning was published, humanity has failed to make sufficient progress in solving environmental challenges, and alarmingly, most challenges (with the exception of stabilising the ozone layer) are getting significantly worse. Ecological crises are accompanied by a growing disaster risk heavily affecting people's lives and increasing economic losses. The European Environmental Agency (EEA), in its 2017 *Environmental indicator report*, summarised that the **EU's natural capital is not yet being protected, maintained and enhanced** in line with the ambitions of the 7th Environmental Action Plan (EAP) and that the 2020 outlook remains bleak overall. The EEA emphasizes that key concerns persist regarding air quality and noise pollution in urban areas and the chronic exposure of the population to complex mixtures of chemicals in products. In its summary of key concerns, the EEA also mentions the rise in ammonia emissions as well as the lack of policies to address the high rate of land take. The EEA calls for a transformation of key systems of production and consumption that most contribute to environmental and climate pressures and impacts on human well-being including food, energy and mobility.¹⁵
- According to the European Environmental Agency (EEA), **Europe's biodiversity continues to be eroded resulting in ecosystem degradation**. Recent EEA data show that 60% of species and 77% of habitat continue to have an unfavourable conservation status. According to the EEA the main

¹⁴ Masters R, Anwar E, Collins B, et al. (2017) *Return on investment of public health interventions: a systematic review*. J Epidemiol Community Health, p. 827-834.

¹⁵ EEA (2017), *Environmental indicator report*, see Summary p. 5-8.

causes of this loss are changes to natural habitats due to intensive agricultural production systems; construction; quarrying; the overexploitation of forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and soils; invasive alien species; pollution and, increasingly, global climate change.¹⁶ The loss of biodiversity has negative impacts on the ecosystem services which our livelihoods depend such as the importance of certain species such as pollinators.

- The EEA also stressed that despite considerable improvements in past decades, **air pollution is still responsible for more than 400 000 premature deaths in Europe each year**. It also continues to damage vegetation and ecosystems. While air pollution has been reduced since 1990, the health impact is still enormous and progress is very slow. **Ground and surface water pollution** also persist. Nitrate concentrations have fallen in both surface and groundwater and eutrophication has decreased; however, both continue to be a significant problem in several Member States.¹⁷
- While we have achieved food security in Europe and hunger has been reduced globally, feeding a projected global population of 9.6 billion in 2050 is one of the main sustainability challenges of this century in the face of global environmental changes and natural resource constraints, stresses also the EEA. According to the European Commission Science Hub, food consumption is amongst the main drivers of environmental impacts with the agricultural phase being the most impacting lifecycle stage followed by food processing and logistics.¹⁸ Our **food systems need to be fully aligned with the environmental and climate targets** laid down in European policies and the SDGs, in particular by addressing air and water pollution, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, loss of biodiversity, antimicrobial resistance, and negative impacts on public health and animal welfare. The EU is also a net importer of various commodities ranging from tropical fruit, coffee and cocoa, seafood and fish, to soy products and palm oil as well as feed for livestock and aquaculture. The EEA points out the social and environmental impact of European imports.¹⁹ When trading internationally, food production and consumption in Europe should not undermine the sustainable development of third countries, for instance, by creating high pressure on farming land when producing feed crops or other crops for consumption in Europe or accelerating deforestation²⁰ for the production of agricultural and processed products imported into the EU. Vice versa, the export of food products from the EU should never hamper the sustainable development of third countries, in particular, developing countries.

¹⁶ See EEA available at <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/intro> and in particular on the impact of climate change on biodiversity see EEA (2017) *Climate change impacts and vulnerability* available at <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/climate-change-impacts-and-vulnerability-2016>.

¹⁷ European Commission (2018), "Less water pollution from agriculture, but worrying hotspots remain and need stronger action", press release on 4 May 2018.

¹⁸ See European Commission at <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/environmental-impact-food-consumption-europe>.

¹⁹ EEA (2017) *Food in a Green Light. A Systems approach to sustainable food*, p. 21.

²⁰ The 2013 EC study on "The impact of EU consumption on deforestation" showed that the impact of European consumption of agricultural and livestock commodities contribute to 7% of deforestation in third countries, and up to 10% if processed products are counted. In particular oil crops such as soy and palm and their derived processed goods as well as meat consumption play a major role in the impact of EU consumption on global deforestation.

- We are facing the immense challenge of fulfilling our **obligations under the Paris Agreement** to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level and to do justice to those suffering from the consequences of climate change globally. The EU and its Member States need to stand by their commitments and act in order to ensure the transition to a low carbon society and increase resilience.
- Our economic system rapidly needs to **transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns**. According to the International Resource Panel, our per capita **use of primary raw materials** is four times higher than the world average and 10 times higher than that of low income countries.²¹ High-income countries produce the largest amounts of **waste** per capita, with the OECD countries alone generating almost half of the world's waste, while Africa and South Asia produce the least waste.²²
- **Global value chains** are complex and business and public authorities have to work together to deal with challenges regarding resource exploitation, pollution, deforestation, land grabbing, ocean degradation or violations of labour rights in developing and emerging markets. National and European places certain accountability requirements on some companies, but regulation of corporate accountability remains weak and due diligence obligations for negative human rights and environmental impact are not the norms. European policy-makers are still discussing how the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapters of trade agreements can actually be implemented.
- The fiscal and administrative capacities of states – including Member States and developing countries – to act and direct have been undermined where **corruption, money-laundering, tax-competition, tax-evasion and corporate tax avoidance** occur. While it is important to acknowledge our progress, our current model of development is flawed and unsustainable for our present and future generations. There is only little time left to achieve the goals and to attain a sustainable society and economy within planetary boundaries. On this path, all Sustainable Development Goals are relevant for Europe domestically as well as globally, and they require immediate and coordinated action. The SDGs provide a framework for the EU to address, collectively and in a coordinated fashion, the complexities we face as a whole region, as Member States, regions and municipalities, businesses and citizens.

b. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES TO ENABLE THE TRANSITION

Agenda 2030 is universal and indivisible. The EU and its Member States should achieve all 17 goals and 169 targets before 2030. The objectives are clear: a society and economy where no-one is left behind and that thrive within the limits of our fair share of planetary resources.

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform stresses that we need to adhere to the following principles to enable the transition towards a sustainable future:

²¹ International Resource Panel (2017), *Assessing global resource use: A systems approach to resource efficiency and pollution reduction*.

²² World Bank, "Waste Generation" (Urban Development Series – Knowledge Papers).

Non-regression

We need to respect the "principle of non-regression", that is, fulfil existing commitments under international human rights instruments, the Paris Agreement, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (10YFP) and other international agreements.

Transformation of our social and economic model

In order to progress towards sustainability, we require a profound transformation to a fair, participative, transparent and democratic society: all have to become part of the paradigmatic shift of the model on which our societies and economies are based.

We need a new economic model that provides well-being for all within the planetary boundaries, is inclusive, fosters social cohesion and respects human rights while generating value for all, spurring innovations and ensuring our competitiveness. Europe should be at the forefront of this global transformation by promoting high environmental, social and tax standards at international level and by ensuring a level-playing field globally. A particular focus on means of implementation is necessary, including partnerships, sustainable financial systems, research and innovation, and enhanced monitoring and accountability.

No-one left behind

In line with the Agenda 2030 principle, all policies should first reach out to those who are left furthest behind. "Leaving no-one behind" means ending extreme poverty and reducing inequalities, disparities and all forms of discrimination, ensuring that all goals and targets of the Agenda are met for all segments of society. The principle means not waiting for a trickle-down effect but prioritising and fast-tracking actions for the poorest and most marginalised in society such as ethnic minorities, refugees and migrants, stateless persons, persons with disabilities, the homeless, as well as children and young people, in order to close gaps rather than widen them. In Europe, where most people have attained a minimum living standard, there are wide gaps between and within countries, many operating without an adequate minimum income safety net²³. Social standards are indispensable for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights and we need to focus on ensuring social standards in employment, social protection and services and to address wealth, income, health and educational inequalities, including the distribution of wealth, social and political exclusion of more vulnerable and marginalised groups, and the lack of effective participation by citizens in decision-making processes. We must ensure that all groups are able to participate in democratic, social and economic life. More opportunities need to be provided for all in society to allow people to grow and maximise their talents through lifelong learning.

²³ According to the ESPN report (2015) for the European Commission on national policies on minimum income, only five MS currently ensure adequate minimum income to ensure people escape poverty.

Beyond our border, we must strengthen our efforts to support developing countries' efforts to realise human rights, including economic and social rights. That implies ensuring coherence between development policies and other policies, such as our trade, investment and tax policies, to allow those countries to generate locally driven economic development, domestic resources and decent jobs, and to make sure that direct foreign investment does not undermine but trigger sustainable development.

Recognising planetary boundaries

In 2009, Johan Rockström, the director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre, led a group of 28 internationally renowned scientists to identify the nine processes that regulate the stability and resilience of the Earth system. The scientists proposed quantitative planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. Crossing these boundaries increases the risk of generating large-scale abrupt or irreversible environmental changes.²⁴ A safe operating space for humanity exists only within the planetary boundaries where we use fewer resources than we need to maintain biodiversity and the resilience of the ecosystems²⁵ while being able to ensure well-being, in particular food security, for the planet's growing population.

With the current over-use of non-renewable resources and the unsustainable use of many renewable resources, our level of carbon emissions and our practices of exporting waste and externalising pollution, Europeans live far beyond their fair share of resources. Our undue use of resources hampers the development of communities in the Global South as well as the sustainability of our own societies and pushes all of us beyond these planetary boundaries. Social innovation, inclusive technical innovation as well as nature-based solutions are necessary for achieving a decarbonised economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns to return within the planet's ecological limits. In Europe, we have achieved progress in terms of resource efficiency, that is, we use less resources in order to produce the same level of output; however, resource efficiency oftentimes reduces costs which may in return lead to a further increase in consumption and thus no absolute reduction – or even an increase – in resource use (rebound effect). The concept of resource

²⁴ The nine planetary boundaries that humanity should not cross are stratospheric ozone depletion, loss of biosphere integrity, biodiversity loss and extinctions, chemical pollution and the release of novel entities, climate change, ocean acidification, freshwater consumption and the global hydrological cycle, land system change, nitrogen and phosphorus flows to the biosphere and oceans, and atmospheric aerosol loading. The first scientific article on the framework was published in 2009 in the journal *Ecology and Society*. A feature article in *Nature* the same year generated more than 2535 citations. It stated that society's activities have already pushed climate change, biodiversity loss, shifts in nutrient cycles (nitrogen and phosphorus), and land use beyond the boundaries into unprecedented territory. For a reference see also the Stockholm Resilience Centre at <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>.

²⁵ The world total resources represents the total capacity of the natural resource systems that are available in support our socio-economic activities. The resources for biodiversity represent the natural resources needed each year to maintain a minimally acceptable level of biodiversity. This recognizes that humanity as part of a web of life, not as a stand-alone species, and that we cannot consume the entire resource capacity of the biosphere. The resources needed for resilience represents the amount of resources needed to maintain a safety net for Humans and the entire socio-ecologic system. This applies to both renewable resources such as fresh water, forest biomes, fisheries, and more generally the biological productivity of land and marine ecosystems. It is also equally applicable to non-renewable resource categories such as metals and minerals including fossil fuels, as long as realistic assumptions are made regarding the scale of non-renewable reserves, use rates over time, and the rate of technological advancement which will allow substitution. See E. Barry / R. Walker (2014) "Resource sufficiency evaluation", University of Stanford.

sufficiency takes into consideration what is necessary for human well-being and strives to reduce unsustainable consumption volumes while ensuring a good quality of life.

Respect for human rights

More than 90% of the SDG targets are directly linked to human rights and labour standards, and are underpinned by legally binding obligations. A human rights-based approach to implementing Agenda 2030 recognises the rights and obligations under international human rights law, emphasises that individuals and groups are rights-holders, and that states and non-state actors have corresponding obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Sustainable development has to go hand in hand with the achievement of human rights.

Rule of law

Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions are at the core of sustainable development and the European Union has long acknowledged the importance of promoting democratic values, the rule of law and sound public administration as part of the enlargement process. However, the widespread evidence of backsliding on these fundamental values by Member States demonstrates the need for the EU to create a framework that will safeguard these institutions, without which Agenda 2030 will remain a paper exercise. This includes a regular rule of law monitoring and assessment mechanism which is linked to the distribution of EU funds; dedicated funding lines to support investigative journalists and watchdog organisations within the EU; and reform of the "Article 7" procedure to sanction breaches of the rule of law and fundamental rights.

Policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)

Actors in all policy areas need to be guided by the four dimensions of sustainable development – social, environmental, economic and governance. It is also critical to address and minimise the potential negative impacts of domestic policies on the wellbeing of people living in other countries, particularly in developing countries, and of future generations. We need to ensure integrated EU legislation and programmes, funding and investments, systematically maximise synergies and minimise trade-offs between economic, social and environmental policy objectives. Improved and timely checks and balances are essential to ensure that EU policies, programmes and international agreements in all areas contribute to – and do not undermine – achievement of the SDGs. Policy coherence for sustainable development must be in line with international human rights instruments, Multi-Lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other international agreements. It encompasses both the coherence between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, as well as taking into account the impact of any policy on developing countries.

c. OUR VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE EU IN A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

In line with the vision stated in Agenda 2030, we envisage a Europe in which:

- our political priorities and the focus of our activities is on ensuring well-being for all within planetary boundaries;
- all people regardless of their ethnicity, nationality status or the absence thereof, sex, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, disability, age, gender identity or sexual orientation enjoy equal rights as well as equal participation in social, economic, cultural and political life and transparent decision-making;
- nobody has to be poor, excluded or homeless and everybody is actively included in society and working life;
- we have minimised inequalities between countries and regions, within countries and different parts of society, including by ensuring universal access to essential public services and social protection;
- we promote high social, health and environmental standards at the international level, encourage others around the world to embrace the sustainability agenda and remain globally competitive;
- we lead by example in the global fight against climate change, in protecting biodiversity and ensuring clean and healthy air, water, soil and seas, and motivate stakeholders outside Europe to equally contribute to these objectives;
- our use of non-renewable resources has been reduced in absolute terms, the use of renewable resources are used sustainably, we transition industries towards sustainable practices, have fostered the circular economy and the transition from fossil-based and harmful materials with renewable and non-toxic materials;
- all have access to affordable and renewable energy sources in a decarbonised society and economy;
- we ensure a sustainable food system from field to fork for the planet's growing population, enable healthy food and drink environments which encourage healthy patterns of consumption, safeguard clean drinking water, guarantee fair prices for farmers and favourable conditions for those producing our food, and, when importing agricultural products, pay sustainable prices that enable living wages and support farmers' productivity and sustainability; we make sure that internationally traded commodities and products do not have negative impacts at home or abroad, such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, negative health impacts or human rights violations; we avoid food waste;
- the economy is inclusive, strong and resilient, we ensure the sustainability of our social systems, everybody has equal opportunities and access to decent work, and we have the right framework to create more quality jobs;
- social and technical innovation for sustainable development is transforming society while all have access and skills to harness the potential of technology and evaluate its consequences;
- all have access to quality education, and lifelong learning, healthcare, housing and adequate social protection and public services without discrimination;

- we participate in public decision-making that conforms to the highest standards of integrity, transparency, accountability and democratic governance, processes are open, inclusive and participatory for all social groups, and civil society's role in civil dialogue is supported and allowed to flourish.

d. NEED FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE STRATEGY

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform reminds the European Union and its Member States of their commitments towards Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement. They require a *Sustainable Europe 2030* strategy to succeed the EU2020 strategy. This overarching strategy should:

- be **visionary and transformative** while committing to specific and time bound (SMART) **deliverables**;
- outline a **roadmap with timelines, short, medium and long-term objectives** and specific measures and responsibilities to reflect Agenda 2030 in all internal and external policies and financial mechanisms;
- be based on an **in-depth gap analysis** of our current policies and programmes including **measures already taken** at EU, national, regional and local level to implement the 2030 goals;
- go **beyond five-year political cycles** and outline the EU's long-term strategy of how to achieve a sustainable future for all;
- address the interlinkages of the SDGs – and their **environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions** – in a holistic and coherent policy approach at all levels;
- monitor **qualitative and quantitative progress** in line with the SGD targets and indicators;
- gather **evidence** on policy areas which require urgent intervention and prioritise solutions which achieve the maximum number of SDG targets to **minimise the need for trade-offs** with mitigation strategies as a last resort;
- recognise the need for **transformative economic and social models** and contribute to a **paradigm shift** in the EU's approach to economic demands, recognising the need to protect the well-being of people and planetary boundaries;
- ensure a **bottom-up approach** by involving civil society, social partners, educational institutions, industry, regions and cities; localising SDGs and strengthening partnerships;
- **assess the merits of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform**, agree on ways to improve its representativeness, inclusiveness, participation and role as a basis to **create a permanent Multi-Stakeholder Platform** that can ensure that the strategy is **inclusive, participatory, accountable and transparent**.

Chapter II – Leadership and governance

The European Union needs to remodel its own governance to face current challenges while giving life to the principle of partnership, including civic participation. This is an essential foundation to connect and build trust with citizens. It needs to **involve all stakeholders and sectors at all levels** to

create the necessary ownership and deliver tangible results for people, the economy and the environment.

In the current times, it is also worth stressing that the EU can only function as a level of decision-making based on the rule of law, the respect for fundamental rights and democracy. We need to ensure that these principles are realised for all citizens, improving the transparency and democratic legitimacy of decision-making and ensuring access to and permanent involvement of citizens in the political process.

Strong leadership will be needed to set up such governance and ensure a coherent approach to sustainable development.

a. **SETTING SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN MOTION: SHOWING EU LEADERSHIP**

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have to be integrated into EU policies – in full respect of subsidiarity – with each EU institution driving the implementation of the strategy forward:

- Within the European Commission, **the president, with a dedicated project team** and working with all Commissioners, should be in charge of mainstreaming SDGs within EU policies, programmes, international agreements and horizontal tools. This will entail strong coordination across Directorates-General (DGs) with sustainable development contact points that have balanced expertise on each of the different dimensions of the SDGs within each DG.
- The president of the European Commission has to be accountable for the implementation of SDGs, should assess the progress made and outline further action needed in relation to the **Sustainable Development Goals in the annual State of the European Union** address before the European Parliament, and regularly report to the General Affairs Council. He or she should also show to what extent the European Union is already meeting the Sustainable Development Goals through current policies.
- The European Parliament not only has a scrutinising role but, as a co-legislator, should also ensure SDGs are coherently **mainstreamed in legislative files across committees**. In addition, the Members of the European Parliament have an important role in reaching out to their constituencies and supporting regionalisation and localisation of the SDGs. The Council of the European Union as legislator has a key role and responsibility for delivering the SDGs through EU legislation. The Council as co-legislator also has a role to ensure that SDGs are mainstreamed in all files.
- In addition, within the Council, Member States should present their Sustainable Development Goals **Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at ministerial level** via the General Affairs Council. This will be the occasion to have practical exchanges such as peer reviews among Member States.

The 2030 Agenda Working Party could help prepare these reviews in a crosscutting manner. These will be instrumental in encouraging Member States to set up a comprehensive strategy on domestic and external policies at national level.

- The European Union's advisory bodies – the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee – have a role in feeding back information about the progress of change across territories and sectors to the European institutions, and promoting the involvement of local and regional authorities and of civil society respectively at EU level. They should involve other relevant European umbrella organisations to step up their mobilisation on SDGs and help monitor the involvement of local and regional authorities, and of civil society organisations.

b. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Each level of government has its own legitimacy due to its specific remits in various fields relating to SDGs. All levels – according to their competences – should therefore contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

The European Union should position itself as a role model in the annual HLPF process. Its institutions and Member States should show leadership to engage other countries in progressing on the SDGs, including through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The European Commission will have to promote Sustainable Development Goals implementation and create enabling environments, including in international trade agreements, as well as proposing **relevant legislation and policy frameworks in its areas of competence**. It will have to provide funding opportunities and other incentives for capacity-building, mutual learning and exchange of good practices to encourage Member States, regions, cities, and, through cooperation, third countries, to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at their level.

The European Union should be particularly careful to foster cooperation at all levels, starting with cooperation between the European Commission and the Member States, championing the setting up of **national Sustainable Development Goals strategies** and engaging the regional and local level.

A territorial approach for SDG implementation

Cities and regions have a crucial role to play in the achievement of the SDGs. Most underlying policies and investments are a shared responsibility across levels of government.²⁶ For example, subnational governments were responsible for 57% of total public investment in 2016 on average across OECD countries and for almost 40% worldwide²⁷.

²⁶ Sustainable Development Solution Network (2016), *Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities: A Guide for Stakeholders*, <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/9.1.8.-Cities-SDG-Guide.pdf>.

²⁷ OECD (2018), *Subnational Governments in OECD countries: Key Data*, <http://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/Subnational-governments-in-OECD-Countries-Key-Data-2018.pdf>.

Within areas such as social inclusion, inclusive labour markets, mobility, energy, climate action, health promotion and protection, environment, social innovation, public services and urban planning policies, regions and cities have the scope and responsibility to translate European and national plans into ambitious action on the ground. They take into account territorial specificities, cultural patterns and expectations, carefully building ownership among inhabitants and working with all stakeholders. Regions and cities of the European Union also have partnerships and twinning projects with regions and cities outside the European Union. These have the potential to boost the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals abroad.

Accordingly, the European Union should further push for **a territorial approach for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals** via initiatives such as "localising Sustainable Development Goals", cohesion policy and the European Union Urban Agenda. This should allow a **two-way dialogue** where European and national strategies would associate regional and local levels while local and regional feedback would allow higher levels of government to remove implementation obstacles and scale up best practices, including grassroots initiatives. Where appropriate, the EU level should encourage the development of systems of local or regional targets or contributions to policies under the national SDG strategies.

C. A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP

Active collaboration with stakeholders is of critical importance. Fresh ways of working together should be continuously explored to maximise the constructive potential of partnerships.

Civil society's role as implementer, promoter and watchdog of the Sustainable Development Goals should be supported. It should be especially protected given the worrying trend of shrinking space for expertise and critical voices in some Member States.

In general, civil society is defined as people coming together and organising themselves in the pursuit of common/public interests with such groups representing children, young people, families, persons with disabilities, women, men, the elderly, poorest people, developing countries, the media and a wide array of communities.

Stimulating civil society participation is essential in order to connect to citizens and help (re)build trust at all levels of governance. Many citizens and stakeholders are still not aware of the Sustainable Development Goals and the benefits that their implementation would bring for the well-being of citizens and future generations. **Partnerships between civil society in its diversity, together with enterprises, cities, regions, parliaments, Member States and the European Union** can help make the Sustainable Development Goals understandable to the different stakeholders. They need to **link the Sustainable Development Goals to people's everyday lives** and to business strategies.

Partnerships between **businesses**, investors, customers, consumers, researchers and policy-makers should be encouraged where it helps to support existing best practices and **co-construct new market opportunities** based on sustainable development, for example with the circular and sharing economy.

Social dialogue is a key part of governance and of the EU social model. In this context, social partners must be seen as an integral part of the partnership approach, in full respect of their autonomy. **Collective bargaining, negotiations and social dialogue** are key tools for achieving balanced solutions in the workplace that protect workers whilst ensuring the competitiveness of enterprises. Social dialogue should be **strengthened**, where necessary, including through **involvement of employees, managers**, and their representatives - trade unions and employer organisations – in a constructive way and in line with national industrial relations systems.

Open corporate governance supported by corporate social responsibility practices and corporate accountability is also necessary to achieve the SDGs, as is **economic democracy**, as part of the overall governance and EU social model.

Qualification and learning, through **formal and non-formal education**, will also have a key role to play in supporting young people in becoming active citizens working towards a sustainable future, supporting people of all ages in adapting skills to the needs of society and creating a Sustainable Development Goal culture shift. Efforts to enhance the knowledge, skills and competences of youth and adults for employment and decent jobs require an understanding of local needs and will be better defined through dialogue with teachers and educators, learners and employers.

Children and young people – while being distinct groups and requiring different policies to enable their participation in the implementation of the SDGs – are both critical agents of change. Their rights must be fulfilled²⁸, they should be fully integrated in multi-stakeholder action to gain ownership of the SDGs as soon as possible. For example, education for sustainable development could be introduced early on to school curriculums, with the level of complexity dependent on age. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will only be possible with the **contribution of all stakeholders**. It will be for each stakeholder to determine their own role and issues and how to co-create solutions for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

d. CROSS-SECTOR COORDINATION TO MAINSTREAM SDGs

As an integrated agenda, the implementation of Agenda 2030 requires an important **coordination** effort between and within policy-making bodies, different organisations, stakeholders and sectors of the economy, to ensure **policy coherence, in the domestic and external context**, maximising synergies and minimising trade-offs.

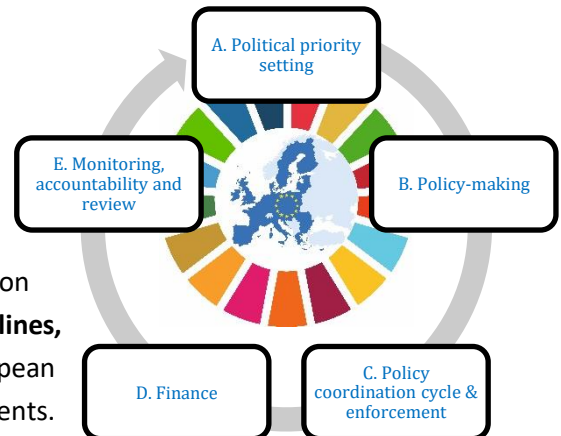
²⁸ While children's rights are covered by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people are not subject to a specific legal instrument recognising and centralising their rights and protections; nonetheless, they are rights-holders and need to be viewed as such in society.

Accordingly, organisations of all types – public and private – should assess how best to involve relevant stakeholders and ensure internal cooperation to find synergies between Sustainable Development Goals, create **joint benefits** and new **business opportunities**.

Chapter III – How should the EU's toolbox evolve?

a. POLITICAL PRIORITY SETTING

Sustainable development has since long been at the heart of the European project and is now one of the fundamental overarching objectives of the EU, anchored in its Treaties. Sustainable development and decarbonisation should be at the heart of future **Political Guidelines, programmes and priorities** of European Commissions, European Councils and national, regional and local governments. Sustainable development should run as a red thread through **the annual work programmes at all levels and institutions of governance. Policy coherence for sustainable development** poses an immense challenge given the complexity and fragmentation of European policies. Only when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will become the guiding framework for the post-2020 agenda, can policies become truly coherent. To make sure future EU and national leaders set the right priorities, it is crucial to **raise awareness among politicians and civil servants**, in the run up to elections and thereafter, as well as among voters, civil society and the media, in order to hold decision-makers to account with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals delivery.



b. POLICY MAKING

Integrating sustainable and low carbon development objectives and principles throughout the entire EU policy-making process is essential for the European Union to be able to deliver on its 2030 Agenda and Paris commitments. The current **Better Regulation agenda** could become more constructive by upgrading it to deliver not only on making efficient but also coherent legislation, by mainstreaming the sustainable development goals and principles throughout the policy-making cycle, in line with the 2016 and 2017 commitments from the Commission²⁹, Council³⁰ and Parliament³¹.

A stronger focus on and more explicit mentioning of the sustainable policy-making approach should therefore be incorporated in the Better Regulation guidelines, to guide European policy makers to create, implement and enforce well-designed policies, laws and regulations – both

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-next-steps-sustainable-europe-20161122_en.pdf

³⁰ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23989/st10370-en17.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2017-0239+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

internal and external - that contribute to sustainable development. To truly leave no one behind, a human rights-based and solutions-oriented approach should be adopted, where accountability, citizens' participation and transparency are maintained at all levels, with special attention for marginalized and vulnerable groups, as well as for geographical imbalances.

The EU should apply an **integrated multi-dimensional policy-making approach** in all stages of its domestic and international policy-making. The EU should:

- (1) identify and reinforce those policies that are interlinked and have positive impacts beyond their first remit (including a longer-term perspective for 2030 and beyond),
- (2) stop developing and implementing policies that have negative impacts on other areas that are critical for the achievement of sustainable development and that conflict with Member States', regional and local governments', third countries' and future generations' ability to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and wellbeing, and
- (3) minimise trade-offs wherever possible. In cases of inevitable trade-offs, the European Union should mitigate the possible negative impacts and be more transparent in its handling of conflicts of interests and incoherence, in both the policy design and implementation phases, to allow for more political and stakeholder scrutiny. To this end, the EU needs more participatory and evidence-based policy-making, based on a proper context analysis, more and better disaggregated data and in-depth progress analysis, making sure all relevant policy-makers and public interest groups have the possibility to engage, and that public interest always prevails.

Ex-ante impact assessments, ex-post evaluations and fitness checks

Impact assessments are in principle a powerful tool for ensuring that the negative impacts of EU policies on sustainable development within the EU and in partners countries, and their positive impacts are maximised. On one hand **EU policy-makers should use the new Impact Assessment Guidelines and its tools to assess the economic, social, health, environmental, governance, territorial and external impacts more systematically and carefully**, especially after some welcome revisions of 2015. On the other hand, **impact assessments should be further improved to better mainstream the 2030 Agenda and ensure adequate results in the following ways:**

- **Better integrate, balance and adequately assess the economic, social, environmental, governance – internally, externally and intergenerationally** - in all impact assessments and policy considerations and take them into account **early-on** in the policy-making process, analyse short and **long-term consequences** and assess the **added value** initiatives can bring to **sustainable development**. Ensure a balanced approach when evaluating short- and long-term benefits and costs. Use available statistical information from international bodies, such as the United Nations and others.

- **Ensure no one is left behind** by assessing differentiated impacts on gender and on the most vulnerable groups in society, on enterprises and other stakeholders, based on gender responsive data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, statelessness, disability, education level, profession, and geographic location, across different types of regions or territories, with attention for developing countries.
- Ensure that activities triggered by the EU's policies **stay within our fair share of the boundaries of the planet**, avoid dangerous climate change and protect our natural resources (water, air, soil, biodiversity) avoid overconsumption and minimize, where possible avoid, pollution.
- **Raise awareness and build capacity across all Directorates-General** to better understand sustainable development, the interlinkages between policies and the impact they might have on human rights, climate change and sustainable development, in Europe and in partner countries, when they draft the inception impact assessment and set up the inter-service group, thereby improving the implementation of better regulation tools.
- **All policies, laws and strategies should be accompanied by impact assessments.** In the interests of **transparency**, draft impact assessments (not only inception impact assessments) should be published before the legislative proposal is adopted by the Commission and all impact assessments should be published regardless of whether they result in a legislative proposal. The Impact Assessments to be conducted by the **European Parliament and the Council** in certain cases, need to be performed **more timely and systematically**, including related to significant amendments to Commission proposals, for improving the knowledge basis of the decision making for the benefit of stakeholders and citizens.
- The **Regulatory Scrutiny Board**, as the independent body checking the quality of draft impact assessments, should check that impact assessments **take into account the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the long-term and coherent and balanced approach required for sustainable development** enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. In case of trade-offs, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board should be clearly informed about the necessary choices made and options available, before it makes a recommendation.

A **'sustainability check'** should also be more explicitly incorporated in all **Fitness checks under the REFIT programme** when it evaluates whether existing legislation is 'fit for purpose' in contributing to its policy objectives in a sustainable way and whether policies are coherent, in contributing to and not undermining the achievement of the SDGs.

Information and consultation

These improved practices should be complemented by greater accountability through ensuring transparency and consultation with all relevant stakeholders and through improved redress mechanisms. Firstly, the European Union and its Member States need to inform and consult those affected by policies, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, when drafting

policies and programmes and negotiating international agreements. In this regard, it is important that the EU:

- **Proactively engages with relevant stakeholders** and – where needed - set up multiple mechanisms for outreach and participation at different levels in order to be inclusive of all groups within the population. Examples of mechanisms that could be used to understand and include the perspectives and voices of different groups in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals implementation are social audits (starting with the principle of free, prior and informed consent by affected communities), scorecards, surveys and online polling, public consultations, structured dialogues, as well as leveraging technology and social media for social outreach and participation opportunities whereby decision-makers listen to citizens. To this end, local and regional authorities play a key role as they are the closest level of government to citizens. Public consultations should allow for open answers or comments and questions should be simple and clear.
- Ensures that opportunities for participation and involvement in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals are **clear, accessible and well-structured**, with transparent and accessible **information**, documents available well in advance and **time** to consult with people and communities impacted by its policies. When stakeholder suggestions are not incorporated, we ask that the Commissions give us feedback in broad terms on the reasons for omitting their recommendations. Make sure that the information provided is citizen oriented and available in different languages.
- Where needed, **builds the capacity of stakeholders** to be able to engage in policy making processes **and of politicians and civil servants** to meaningfully engage stakeholders in their policy-making work. Invest in understanding the nature of the different stakeholders involved in the process and the different levels of participation required.
- **Safeguards the balance between interests raised by various stakeholders**, with due attention to power imbalances, whilst being aware that public interests like protecting our planet are not negotiable.

C. POLICY COORDINATION CYCLE AND EU-WIDE ENFORCEMENT

The EU needs to play an active role as **coordinator and promotor of sustainable development, both in Europe and around the world**, and encourage more EU collaboration. It is important that policies are well coordinated between the EU, Member States, regional and local levels, but also that **agreed policy actions are being enforced** to be able to bring about change domestically across the EU and internationally.

The **European Semester**, as the EU's current central annual economic and social governance coordination cycle, needs to be aligned with and guided by the **new long-term sustainable strategic framework** (aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the EU's long-term decarbonisation plans).

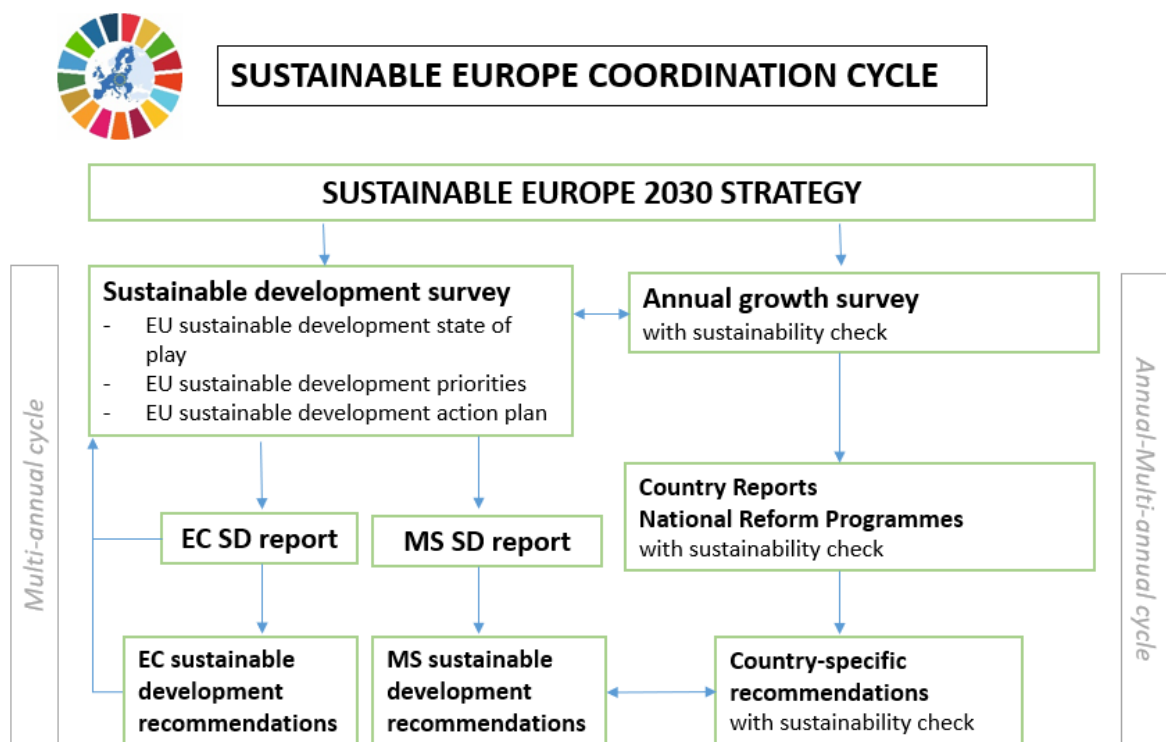
To this end, the following **Sustainable Europe coordination cycle** should be introduced:

- The **Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy**³² would provide the overarching long-term strategic framework guiding multi-annual European sustainable development coordination, and EU policy and governance mechanisms, including a more sustainable economic governance and European Semester process.
- A multi-annual **Sustainable Development Survey** should be adopted, which takes stock of implementation of the Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy and which identifies the **sustainable development priorities and actions** for the EU and its Member States as a whole for the first coming years (in an EU Sustainable Development Action Plan), covering the different sustainable development dimensions, domestically and externally. The **EU Sustainable Development Action Plan** should detail the specific policies the EU will adopt and implement to boost progress towards the Sustainable Europe targets. The Sustainable Development Survey launches the multi-annual national cycle of reporting, review of action plans and preparation of recommendations.
- **Member State Sustainable Development reports** analyse how the Member States move towards the Sustainable Europe 2030 targets, on the basis of official progress reports, stakeholder reports, Voluntary National Reviews, inter-institutional dialogue and peer reviews. **European Commission Sustainable Development Reports** analyse how the European Commission is moving towards the Sustainable Europe 2030 targets, on the basis of Eurostat's sustainable development progress report, qualitative progress reports, stakeholder reports, inter-institutional dialogue and a peer review.
- **Member State Sustainable Development Recommendations** provide policy guidance tailored to the Member State on how to boost sustainable development based on the EU Sustainable Action Plan. Recommendations should balance the different sustainable development dimensions, foster synergies and limit trade-offs. Member States should develop or adapt National Sustainable Development Action Plans accordingly. **European Commission Sustainable Development Recommendations** should guide the European Commission's work in a similar manner.
- The European Semester and current socio-economic governance cycle should be guided and informed by the **Sustainable Development Survey and coordination cycle**. A **Sustainability Check should be built into the Annual Growth Survey and subsequent process** to prevent negative and strengthen positive social, environmental and governance impacts of proposed economic and fiscal policies and programmes. The European Semester country-specific

³² See also chapter 1.

recommendations should take into account the Member State Sustainable Development recommendations.

- **Ownership** at European, national, regional and local level would be increased by better involving the European Parliament, national and regional parliaments, social partners, civil society, enterprises and local and regional authorities in a **more democratised coordination cycle**. The European Union should develop concrete guidelines and quality standards, monitor and regularly report on participation and build the capacity of these different actors to feed into the process, including increasing resources for engagement at national level whilst fully respecting their different roles and mandates.



The European Commission is to carry out its duty as guardian of the treaties in full, ensuring that EU law is fully implemented and enforced. It should concentrate on better enforcement of its laws at national level. This implies stepping up the handling of **open complaint cases and infringement procedures** and amending legislation to close loopholes if they are identified. Additionally, the Commission should re-consider the idea of better inspections. Furthermore, the Commission has to ensure adequate and sufficient staffing and funding to allow effective compliance assurance within its administration. This should also link to individual's access to justice in order to push the relevant levels of governance to enforce the legislation (e.g. Aarhus Convention in environmental matters or consumer redress). Access to & enforcement of rights under the **EU Charter for individuals** should also be improved, which link closely to various SDGs.

Moreover, the European Union and its Member States should pay particular attention to ensure effective **access to remedy** in cases of business-related human rights abuse for persons inside and

outside of Europe. The European Union and its Member States should improve access to remedy and gather information about access to remedy to be able to assess access and to distribute information, based on the recommendations of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.³³ Civil society representatives, in particular from the most vulnerable or marginalised groups in Europe and the Global South, need to be closely involved in this work. The Voluntary National Review process could also provide an interesting channel for impacted countries and communities to provide feedback on the impact on their own human rights and sustainable development efforts.

d. FINANCE

These ambitious goals can only be achieved if and when the necessary finance is being mobilised for sustainable development. There are five ways in which the EU and its Member States can ensure more sustainable finance:

1. **Sustainable fiscal reform:** Member States should conduct sustainable fiscal reform to tax less positive contributions (income from labour), and tax negative impacts more, such as goods and resource use that can have undesirable consequences (emissions, pollution, use of finite resources, health-harming products³⁴) ensuring that the overall tax system remains progressive and does not demand disproportionate contributions from low income earners. Such shift towards sustainable, progressive and gender-sensitive taxation should be complemented with more stable elements, including taxation on property and inheritance.³⁵ In parallel, the fight against fiscal evasion and tax havens remains crucial.³⁶ Member States should also analyse and address the impact their tax systems have on third countries, in particular developing countries and support a reform of global tax governance, leading to a strong and well-resourced tax commission under the UN³⁷.
2. **Ensure fully sustainable public spending by the EU (through the Multiannual Financial Framework, Invest EU Fund and the European Investment Bank) and its Member States.** This would require the EU and MS to:
 - Set and track ambitious environmental, social, governance and economic sustainability spending targets against which all public spending should be benchmarked.
 - Support sectors/actors in their transition towards a sustainable trajectory and gradually phase out unsustainable subsidies.³⁸

³³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Opinions on access to remedy, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-opinion-01-2017-business-human-rights_en.pdf

³⁴ a collection of products the society-wide consumption/use of which has been associated with harm to public health, referred to in a.o. the WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs, <http://www.who.int/ncds/management/time-to-deliver/en>

³⁵ In addition, the majority of stakeholders also support the introduction of a financial transaction tax in the EU.

³⁶ Tax havens and offshore wealth is a key driver for increasing inequality and hampers the capacity of governments to implement distributive policies. See also A. Alstadsaeter, N. Johannesen, G. Zucman: Who owns the wealth in tax havens? Macro Evidence and Implications for Global Inequality, *Journal of Public Economics*, 2018.

³⁷ Recognising the work carried on by the OECD in international tax matters, including through the Inclusive Framework on BEPS and the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, in particular its strong support for capacity-building in developing countries.

³⁸ 'I.e. subsidies - understood in a broad manner, meaning financial aid, tax reductions or state guarantees of exported products - that are potentially harmful to sustainable development objectives.

- Add or strengthen social, environmental and governance indicators along the economic ones set for the European structural and investment funds, the European External Investment Plan and similar national funds, and adjust allocation criteria to better reflect all sustainable development dimensions.
 - Reinforce sustainability criteria in public procurement.
 - Develop a scorecard for each project with minimum threshold required to ensure that projects/sectors supported are aligned with international human rights commitments of the EU and its Member States and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - Align external action financing instruments with Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and other international commitments to ensure support for long term sustainable development of partner countries and mainstream climate and environment priorities across them.
3. **Shift the focus of the private financial system, by:**
- Implementing the European Commission Action Plan on Sustainable finance, including by agreeing on a robust overarching definition of environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks, which should be embedded within financial regulations through mandatory due diligence and increased transparency requirements in order to understand and mitigate ESG risks and impacts within their portfolio holdings, while increasing positive effects.
 - By mid-2019, prepare next steps and integrate the missing High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance recommendations.
4. **Monetary policies of the European Central Bank:** ensure that alignment with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement is taken into account, notably the acquisition of corporate bonds of fossil fuels companies as part of the asset purchase programme.
5. **Implement fully and ambitiously the Addis Ababa Action Agenda** in support of the 2030 Agenda and address the funding gap for implementation of the SDGs at global level.

e. MONITORING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW

A comprehensive, robust, transparent and participatory monitoring, accountability and assessment framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is fundamental to monitor progress, inform decisions and ensure accountability. This would include quantitative and qualitative reports and assessments, as well as stocktaking and outlook reports. The Eurostat indicator report is one element of this, but alone cannot comprehensively capture all dimensions of SDG progress for Europe.

Quantitative progress reporting: EU SDG indicator set, data collection and Eurostat report

The EU and national indicator sets should be aligned with the Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy and targets and national sustainable development strategies respectively. The monitoring report by Eurostat or the national statistical office should assess progress made, where we are now, where we need to go and where we are off-track to achieve the goals and targets by 2030. It should recognize

the integrated nature of the Agenda, assessing inter-SDG and transboundary spill-over effects. Tracking progress requires the ethical and strengthened collection, processing, analysis, interoperability, accessibility, and comparability of decision-relevant data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, nationality status or lack of nationality, disability, geographic location, territorial level and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, to ensure no one is left behind, using official but also reliable complementary data sources and analysis.

Going beyond GDP

The use of a purely economic indicator which is dependent upon the production and consumption of goods is not an adequate measure of the sort of progress we would expect to see in a sustainable Europe and sends the wrong signals to policy makers and citizens. GDP does not capture digitalisation, equality, a circular economy, decent work or the state of the environment, for example. The EU should move towards alternative measures (Target 17.19) which better reflect the quality of life, the environment and the economy.

Qualitative analysis and assessments

Additionally, a qualitative analysis should be conducted, in close collaboration with Member States and stakeholders, on the basis of which an EU qualitative progress report should be elaborated following the process of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) as produced and presented by Member States during the High-level Political Forum, following the same UN reporting guidelines.³⁹ Emphasis should be put on interconnections and the identification of root causes and systemic issues to be addressed. Qualitative and perception-based indicators, indices and composite indicators should be used to support a better understanding of progress towards people's wellbeing and progress for particular groups in society.

Examining stakeholder efforts

All stakeholders committed to sustainable development and the SDGs, including enterprises, should be encouraged and supported in acting on sustainability, to monitor progress and engage with relevant stakeholders on the impact and outreach of their activities and/or policies on sustainable development. We propose the European Commission the following actions:

- To develop joint calls, programmes or platforms to support and incentivize enterprises, industry associations, investors, academics and other stakeholders, in the **analysis, monitoring and up-scaling of business models, value-chain transformations and partnerships** that contribute to the achievements of the SDGs.
- In implementation of the European Action Plan on Sustainable Finance, to make the **European Lab on Corporate Reporting**, the principal place for companies, industry, investors and

³⁹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated_Voluntary_Guidelines.pdf

stakeholders: (1) to look at the challenges and opportunities of disclosure relating to sustainable investments and sustainability risks, (2) to learn from each other on quality and efficient reporting processes as a means towards integrated management and performance; (3) to discuss specific ESG/sustainability/CSR reporting challenges, including in relation to EU financial and non-financial information reporting obligations of enterprises, (4) to build an online repository for the scalability of proven quantitative and qualitative monitoring schemes and indicators for sustainability and integrated reporting.

- To support **local and regional governments'** efforts on localising the SDGs through initiatives and tools, such as the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), which provide assistance to mainstream and monitor progress on the SDGs into local and regional policies.

Furthermore, we propose the European Commission together with civil society and other key players to review whether and how the **Non-Binding Guidelines on Non-Financial Reporting** can inspire and support **all relevant players in society**. This will allow governments, business, investors and civil society actors - also together with Eurostat - to build a more accurate, complete and integrated narrative on their respective and collective progress towards the SDGs.

Public stocktaking and political follow-up

To discuss the findings of the aforementioned progress reports, an annual stocktaking day should be organised, during which progress, challenges, opportunities and emerging issues can be discussed. This should ensure that they can directly inform and inspire decision-makers, stakeholders and the wider public and feed into policy and planning cycles as well as budgetary processes. Alternative measures of progress beyond GDP should guide EU decision-making.

Participation

Citizens and civil society organisations should be engaged throughout the monitoring, accountability and review framework for it to be stronger and more democratically owned. To this end, the European Union and its Member States should:

- Genuinely involve stakeholders and take into account existing initiatives when reviewing the choice of indicators and targets and report on reliable citizen-generated data⁴⁰ as well as science-based data provided by academic institutions, civil society or think tanks;
- Involve civil society in the interpretation and analysis of data and the design and drafting of quantitative and qualitative progress reports, and build capacity for this, including setting up digital platforms;

⁴⁰ Citizen-generated data is data that people, or their organisations, produce to directly monitor, demand or drive change on issues that affect them. It allows for the democratisation of science, increased stakeholders' engagement and public participation.

- Take into account the findings of quality reports coming from stakeholders and sponsor a shared online space where stakeholders can upload their data, analysis and reports;
- Actively involve civil society in the annual public stocktaking day to discuss progress and allow stakeholders and the wider public to hold decision-makers to account as well as in the report to the HLPF.

Chapter IV - Policy Proposals

Sustainability should be reflected in a coherent way throughout the EU policy agenda by mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals across all policies and initiatives⁴¹. For the scope of this paper, the Multi-Stakeholder Platform identified several key EU policy areas for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals post-2020. Acknowledging the indivisibility of the SDGs, this section is naturally non-exhaustive, but primarily reflects the five policy areas assigned high importance by most members of the platform in view of their vital role in the achievement of the SDGs while stressing an integrated policy approach. To strengthen the proposals, each policy is illustrated through recommendations highlighting its social, economic and environmental co-benefits.

a. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is at the heart of sustainable development as it allows people to live a good quality life within their fair share of the planet's resources. Achieving SCP poses one of the main challenges to industrialised countries including the EU and its Member States, in which current consumption and production of goods and services are a main driver for climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution and the over-exploitation of natural resources. All countries need to ensure that consumption patterns result in carbon, water, land and material footprints that reflect a fair share when compared globally.⁴² Achieving sustainable consumption and production means working towards other key objectives enshrined in the SDGs – in particular the eradication of poverty, addressing inequalities, reducing GHG emissions, the protection of biodiversity and clean water, and sustainable food systems.

Governments, business and citizens as consumers all have important roles to play in moving towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, and a wide range of action is necessary to ensure SCP. We need robust policies, legal, financial and market measures to promote the circular economy, to achieve a reduction of the use of non-renewable resources in absolute terms, to move towards resource sufficiency, and to reduce waste, emissions and pollution. Sustainable

⁴¹ On mainstreaming the SDGs across all policies and initiatives, see also the European Commission Communication on Next steps for a sustainable European future COM(2016) 739 final 22.11.2016 https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/commission-communication-next-steps-sustainable-european-future_en

⁴² The International Resource Panel research on global material flows and resource productivity for the period 1970-2010 has revealed that consumption has been a stronger driver of material use than population growth, and that the richest countries consume on average ten times more materials than poorer nations. Achieving SCP in particular for industrialised countries thus means ensuring well-being for all while using the world's resources in an equitable manner.

consumption and production must give particular and robust science-based attention to global supply chains in order to avoid negative social and environmental impacts and increase positive externalities on communities in the EU and in third countries.

Promoting a circular economy is one element in the puzzle of achieving sustainable consumption and production. A circular economy moves beyond the prevailing linear economy of the *extract-produce-use-dump* flow of material and energy towards a cyclical and regenerative model. A more circular economy holds the promise of materials that can be kept in economic circulation for a long time, of reduced environmental degradation and, as a consequence, of reduced costs for emissions and waste. It can be a driver for innovation and for new business and employment opportunities. However, we also need to acknowledge the limitations of the concept. While many traditional societies have circular economies, only around 6% of the global economy today is circular, with the EU27 just slightly above the global rate.⁴³ That is, in order to achieve SCP, we also need to implement measures that go beyond the promotion of the circular economy and reward and acknowledge the contribution of those economic sectors that contribute the most.

Policy-makers at both EU and national level are key in developing the infrastructure and removing systemic barriers to enable a regulatory landscape for a fair and sustainable economy to develop. We can build upon the guidance provided by the 10YFP on SCP regarding the implementation and policy changes needed.

Key recommendations

- ❖ Across all different products consumed in the European Union, we need to actively reduce the footprint and negative impacts of EU consumption on third producing countries, e.g. by taking action to halt deforestation embedded in commodity supply chains or through implementation of the regulation on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. More action is required to ensure due diligence in supply chains and ensure transparent, traceable and sustainable sourcing. Partnerships along the supply chain are key in order to make a positive impact in addressing poverty and ensuring access to food.
- ❖ The EU needs to support technological and social solutions as well as regulatory measures to enable absolute decoupling of resource and energy use from economic activity while working with the private sector to facilitate technology transfer to developing countries.
- ❖ The European Union should opt for sustainable, resilient methods of production and increase agro-ecological production both inside and outside Europe that maintain and increase biodiversity, regenerate ecosystems and opt out from production methods that ignore planetary boundaries. The EU should also promote these objectives through its external programmes such as the External Investment Plan.

⁴³ See Willi Haas et al. (2015), "How Circular is the Global Economy?": "The sociometabolic approach shows that, currently, only 6% of all materials processed by the global economy are recycled and contribute to closing the loop. [...]. The rates for the EU-27 are only slightly above the global averages. This indicates that both the global economy and that of the EU-27 are still far away from a CE."

- ❖ The European Union should develop adequate indicators that recognise and reward the provision of public goods and ecosystems services, such as carbon sequestration in soils and vegetation.
- ❖ When importing and exporting food and agricultural products to the EU and outside, we need to make sure that these do not hamper sustainable development and food security in other countries, and do not undermine rights of small-scale food producers and the control over land, seed, fish and other productive resources.
- ❖ The European Union should focus its public investment and external policies for the provision of public goods rather than focusing on the facilitation of large-scale private-sector investment. It must ensure that its investment, aid and other policies do not legitimise land or water grabbing and are not conducive to human rights violation.
- ❖ The European Union should reform its competition law by issuing general guidelines to clarify under which conditions the private sector can come together to agree on collectively increasing sustainability in a sector without breaching competition law (the EU could thereby prevent the chilling effects on multi-stakeholder initiatives); mandating that mergers be tested for their impacts on sustainability, including their impacts on workers and producers in developing countries; reassessing the definition of dominant market positions, considering maximum market shares and as a last resort breaking up conglomerates that have become too large.
- ❖ Sustainable consumption and production requires addressing major conditions needed to change the economic model on an international level. The EU should actively engage in developing international measures that promote the sustainable and equitable use of resources. Reflecting its own strategy to reduce the use of plastics, the EU should promote a global plastics protocol to drive convergence on definitions and standards.
- ❖ We call for consumption-based indicators for measuring and monitoring key resources, including land, water, material and carbon sequestration in soils and vegetation, as well as other ecosystem services (water regulation, and filtration, waste recycling, substitution of fossil-based material including energy) and to create medium and long-term trajectories with the aim of reducing the EU's natural resource footprint while recognising, adequately rewarding and promoting the increase of positive externalities in Europe and in third countries.
- ❖ The European Union should cooperate with other countries to promote the SCP concept and climate and energy policies, and lead by example.
- ❖ We need stronger civil society involvement regarding SCP through the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, the raw material initiative, the industrial policies round tables and the Social Pillar.

- ❖ The EU should ensure that its research and innovation programme addresses sustainable consumption, renewable energy and alternatives to our current consumption models. The Global Challenges pillar of the next research programme should be a dedicated pillar with the single objective of addressing Agenda 2030, to avoid research into the SDGs being diluted by other EU policy objectives. To ensure a needs-driven research agenda, citizens and civil society should also be engaged in agenda-setting and in monitoring and evaluation.
- ❖ Promote the effective design and implementation of green public procurement policies across the European Union, setting an example for sustainable consumption in public institutions at all levels.

Engage European businesses and industry sectors on sustainability as an integral part of the European Industry Strategy 2030

"Business as usual" will not achieve the market transformation we need. Nor will corporate social responsibility and disruptive innovation by sustainable pioneers be enough to drive the shift. In the same way the EU CSR strategies (2002-2006-2011) have helped magnify the CSR movement across Europe, we would like to propose an equally ambitious yet practical initiative to engage European businesses and industry sectors on sustainability as an integral part of the European Industry Strategy 2030. The aim is to help businesses and industry sectors to accelerate towards more sustainable business practices and in devising solutions to societal sustainability challenges. This would be done through practical supportive measures on learning, sharing, capacity building and new sector and cross-sector collaborative platforms. This initiative will enhance the effectiveness, policy coherence and impact of other European sustainability-related actions and/or reforms. We suggest that this proposal be further discussed in the context of the High Level Industrial Roundtable "Industry 2030", being the place to look at sustainability, in the context of the European Industry Strategy 2030.

To help achieve the SDGs and for Europe to lead by example, the EU, its Member States and business sectors should work hand in hand – in and outside Europe and together with other stakeholders – to assist in the development and mainstreaming of corporate human rights due diligence across the business community.

b. SOCIETY AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION: INVESTING IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, PEOPLE AND HUMAN TALENTS, EMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Sustainable Development Goals offer a way to promote the social dimension of Europe and re-focus on policies to ensure social inclusion and the well-being of people. A European Union that works for its people shall focus on fair and sustainable employment and social policies across all European Union Member States and inclusive European labour markets. In doing so, compliance with recommendations from the human rights treaty bodies monitoring the implementation of the core international human rights treaties has to be ensured. An economy oriented towards the public

good and social progress leading to high levels of employment across society and to improved living and working conditions should be the guiding principle in determining the future orientation of the EU's social dimension⁴⁴. Social protection should also be a pillar of the European Union's strategy for improvement of the social dimension for all at a global level, especially for the most vulnerable⁴⁵, based on solidarity and inclusion. Finally, addressing inequalities is not only important for social cohesion and political stability, but also for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Key recommendations

A more democratic, transparent and participatory EU

Investing in people and ensuring they are not excluded from economic, social, political and cultural life is a necessary precondition for meaningful civic participation essential for achieving the SDGs. There is much the EU can do to ensure that citizens are more engaged in the discussions around the trade-offs that will be an inevitable part of Agenda 2030. It can use its internal market powers to mandate the publication of data by companies and public administrations, allowing citizens to hold them directly to account, and it can enhance legal protections available to whistleblowers and human rights defenders. Importantly, the EU can be a model set of institutions in this respect, ensuring that unequal access to decision-makers is recognised and remedied through greater lobbying transparency; making the European Citizens Initiative a more effective instrument; increasing the transparency of Council decision-making; and ensuring direct access for citizens and NGOs to the European Court of Justice.

Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights beyond 2020

The European Pillar of Social Rights is an example of an EU initiative that can strongly support Member States in achieving the SDGs, by working towards full inclusion and equal opportunities for all. Building upon the complementarity of the Social Pillar and the SDGs, a mutually reinforcing policy agenda should be pursued, also in a post-2020 perspective, by means of legislative and non-legislative measures, policy monitoring and evaluation, programmes and practices and governance and funding mechanisms, such as the next generation European Structural and Investment Funds and the development of the European Education Area. Since the proclamation of the Pillar by all EU institutions, the Commission has published a number of relevant proposals: the European Union work-life balance package, which aims to both promote gender equality and help people reconcile their work, family, care and private lives; the proposal for a directive on transparent and predictable working conditions; and a draft Council Recommendation on access to social protection. The European Semester process is also a key tool for implementation of the Pillar. To ensure adequate monitoring, the European Social Scoreboard should be expanded to cover all principles of the

⁴⁴ In line with Article 9 TFEU: In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

⁴⁵ Vulnerable groups refer to persons at the risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, such as disadvantaged migrant and ethnic minority groups, persons with disabilities, homeless people, or children living in poverty.

European Pillar of Social Rights by adequate headline indicators, and be complementary to existing scoreboards.

Promote Social Economy

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) offers significant potential for economic activity to address long-term societal challenges and create positive social and environmental impacts. In order to unlock the full potential of social and solidarity-based economy enterprises, the European Union should promote an enabling framework for social enterprises to achieve their full potential, promote their role in local and regional value chains, encourage cross-border collaboration, step up the integrated use of the next generation ESI Funds and maintain a strong social investment and skills policy window under the InvestEU proposal in the next long-term EU budget.

Invest in health and well-being

Good physical and mental health and well-being are both an outcome and a precondition for achieving most of the SDGs. Achieving universal health coverage is in this respect a critical goal to achieve other health and well-being-related targets, such as reducing premature mortality, as well as the attainment of all other sustainable development goals and targets related to reduced inequalities, gender equality and elimination of poverty. Investing in children and young people is essential for better health and well-being: tackling disadvantage and social exclusion early, before it compounds, is one of the best ways to tackle inequalities and to help children and young people develop their full potential. This should go hand in hand with investing in measures that promote gender equality, work-life balance, equitable and quality education, accessible and inclusive workplaces and equitable living environments, including community-based services vital for social cohesion and a resilient economy. The importance of a healthy natural environment with low air pollution, as well as the positive role of nature for mental health and human well-being should be a central element of any such plans. In addition, tackling key public health challenges such as the rise of antimicrobial resistance and a persisting burden of non-communicable chronic diseases requires cross-sectorial action at both EU and national levels. The EU is well placed to support Member States and their health systems by tackling common health risks, threats and barriers to action arising from the Union level and offering more targeted resources and expertise to support implementation of policies aiming to maximise people's health and well-being throughout their lives.

Step up sustainability research and innovation

Collaborative science, research and innovation into key societal, economic and environmental challenges generate significant added value and will play an increasingly important role in identifying and delivering solutions for a more sustainable Europe. To achieve a long-term transition towards the SDGs, social, ecological, business-model, institutional and technological innovations will be crucial. A more advanced innovation culture in Europe, driven by an innovation principle, will be crucial to reaching that goal.

While the spontaneous dynamics of scientific communities will not in themselves lead to sustainable development, advances in research and innovation have a great potential to facilitate achievement of the SDGs. Making research and innovation inclusive and working towards a sustainable world requires adequate research and innovation policies. Therefore it is crucial that European research and innovation policy strongly promotes initiatives such as sustainability interdisciplinary research, specifically aimed at analysing complex causal chains involved in the negative phenomena (such as the rise of inequalities, loss of biodiversity, global warming, antimicrobial resistance, etc.) that the SDGs are needed to counteract, while minimising negative interactions in individual SDG implementation (e.g. access to energy in line with decarbonisation, achieving food security without increasing pesticide use affecting human health) and maximising positive synergies between SDGs (e.g. increased capacity of soils to stock carbon dioxide, diffusion of digital technologies to promote education for the most vulnerable and increase labour productivity, sustainable agriculture and healthy diets). Policies must also aim at ensuring uptake of new technologies by citizens, companies and the public sector alike so that new technology and new models of interaction are used as tools for achieving the goals. Inclusive research policies also use open science as a main tool for leveraging access and participation. In line with the SDGs' global and indivisible nature, success in their implementation also implies reducing the gap in scientific and technological capacities between industrialised and developing countries, therefore the EU's official development assistance (ODA) should promote and help strengthen scientific research infrastructure and human capacities as well as technology transfer in developing countries, with a particular focus on Africa⁴⁶.

Ensure a just transition towards a low-carbon economy

Ensuring a just transition will significantly increase the social acceptance of the transformative steps required by a transition to a low-carbon economy.

For affected regions, access to finance to enable investments in sectors with job creation potential should be ensured and the creation of sustainable and green enterprises fostered. This requires coherence between environmental/climate, economic, social and employment policies at national and regional levels.

For sectors particularly affected by the transition, such as the European electricity sector, a combination of plans, policies and investments is crucial for cost-effective decarbonisation, while ensuring that potential negative impacts on business, employment and living conditions are anticipated and mitigated. Thus, greater attention needs to be paid to the needs of people who, by the nature of their work, face a greater risk of being negatively affected by the transition. This includes putting in place adequate social protection measures, ensuring workers at risk of losing their job receive guidance on finding new job opportunities and can benefit from labour market measures, such as opportunities to re-train and to upgrade their skills. The involvement of the social

⁴⁶ According to UNESCO synthetic data, Africa represents less than 2% of world scientific production with more than half of it concentrated in South Africa and Nigeria, which not only creates difficulties for universities and research on the continent, but contributes to excessive dependency of African governments and the private sector on foreign expertise.

partners and communities affected is vital in planning and implementing the policies needed for the transition process.

The EU should play a strong role in supporting a just transition. Here, the next EU budget can be of particular added value in tackling the social impact of decarbonisation, given the magnitude of the change on the labour market that decarbonisation may involve. The European Fund for Adjustment to Globalisation must therefore be revised, keeping in mind the need to support critical restructuring and the need to better anticipate this through increased synergies with structural funds.

Prepare for the future of work, now!

The future of work is strongly linked to sustainable development and will impact many dimensions of life in and beyond employment. Moreover, it will affect all members of society including those who work, those who are not able to work, and those who are unemployed or inactive. The European Pillar of Social Rights offers the EU, Member States and other stakeholders a new momentum to intensify their collaboration in this area. Europe will need to address the megatrends and challenges influencing the world of work (e.g. digitisation, automation, ageing population, globalisation and business re-organisation), also by reflecting on how this links to the global level discussions on the future of work. Considering the complexity, large scope and rapid pace of these interlinked challenges, the European Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the SDGs proposes to explore rapidly how the platform and the European Commission could mutually or complementarily support initiatives and/or reforms focused on people-centred work environments enabling lifelong learnability, adult learning and work-based learning based on fair and equitable culture of partnerships to foster employability, job transitions, and inclusive labour markets – all measures that can contribute to the economic sustainability of enterprises.

Responsible tax behaviour and transparency

As put forward in the 2018 World Inequality Report and the latest OECD Report on Wealth Taxes, tackling global income and wealth inequality requires important shifts in national and global tax policies. To reinforce social and environmental justice, corporate tax avoidance and fiscal dumping need to be addressed at EU level via the implementation notably of the Common Corporate Consolidate Tax Base⁴⁷ and coordination with OECD-partners to ensure fairer taxation of digital companies. To increase responsible tax behaviour and transparency, obligations in the extractives and banking sectors should be expanded to all sectors. Europe should become a pole of excellence on responsible tax behaviour and transparency. We therefore propose to strengthen the role of the EU Platform for tax good governance to: (1) guide enterprises towards more integrated management of sustainability and tax policies; (2) facilitate the exchange of best practices in the field of responsible tax behaviour and tax transparency (to both administrations and the public); (3) engage business, investors, civil society and policy-makers committed to restoring confidence in tax systems and tax responsibility which are a crucial resource for the implementation of the SDGs; (4)

⁴⁷ In addition, the majority of stakeholders also support the introduction of a financial transaction tax in the EU.

support the implementation of public country-by-country reporting (CBCR) requirements, requiring all multinational enterprises to report on their payments to governments.

Refugee protection and migration

The European Union requires a regulatory framework to ensure safe and legal pathways for asylum-seekers and refugees to deliver on its Agenda 2030 commitments. This should respect existing international treaties and to ensure that cooperation with non-EU countries on migration and displacement upholds all human rights. One element of this should also be the development of open and fair systems of circular migration which can help the achievement of SDGs in both home and host countries and to avoid permanent brain drain. To ease the pressure on Member States receiving disproportionate numbers of asylum claims, the European Union should set up an effective mechanism to relocate asylum seekers to other EU Member States. Such a mechanism requires full participation and needs to be able to be activated simply, swiftly and as necessary. While root causes of irregular migration must be addressed, the European Union should refrain from using Official Development Assistance (ODA) to pursue its interest of securing borders and managing migration. It is equally important to resist attempts to further reduce access to protection in Europe and ensure adequate reception conditions, including access to health care for refugees and migrants in the EU.

On a Member State level, efforts should be made to combat discrimination and promote the social inclusion of migrants, including second generation and ethnic minorities, including through further development and implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. A sustainable Europe is also one where people, media and public authorities will value the benefits which refugees and migrants bring to the communities they live in and to the enterprises that hire them. Only a coordinated effort, each in their respective areas of competence, can lead to impactful and sustainable results. In parallel it is important that efforts continue to integrate economic migrants and their family members. This particularly concerns the labour market and societal integration of those people arriving for reasons of family reunification.

Therefore, and in close alliance with the European Platform of Diversity Charters, we propose that the European Commission support the development or expansion in all European Member States, regions and cities business, multi-stakeholder platforms and social partners in order to roll out activities such as:

- skills assessment to identify the upskilling needs of refugees;
- capacity building for employers and workers on employing and working with refugees;
- joint mentoring for refugees within companies;
- work-placement training , qualifications programme and certification schemes.

Invest in children and Youth and promote intergenerational sustainability

The achievement of the SDGs will not be possible without the participation of younger generations and the prioritisation of future generations. A sustainable Europe depends on how we protect, respect and fulfil the rights of children and young people and invest in their participation, potential and personal development. Policies and programmes targeting young people and supporting social inclusion, particularly of more vulnerable groups, as well as those targeting children, need to be prioritised to ensure that young people are not left further behind.

Promote Quality Education

Equitable and inclusive quality education for all is a key driver of sustainable development and plays a key role for the transmission and creation of new knowledge through research and innovation. However, for education to be able to play this role, it has to be sufficiently, sustainably and predictably funded, free from indirect costs as well as tuition fees, and should be rights-based and learner-centred. Priority should be given to ensuring public investment in a full cycle of quality education, from early childhood through to higher education and adult education, as part of a holistic approach to combating social exclusion and promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion across the European Union. Moreover, efforts should be stepped up to integrate education on human rights and sustainable development as well as the SDGs in curricula at all levels of education, through existing and new programmes.

C. ENERGY AND CLIMATE POLICY

Damage to the environment, immediate social consequences – especially in the Global South – as well as economic losses⁴⁸ make action on climate **urgent**. All the more so as larger dangerous impacts in all fields are just around the corner.

While the EU has achieved some initial results and is continuing to make progress in decoupling greenhouse gas emissions from GDP increase⁴⁹, **these efforts are not sufficient to comply with the SDGs and reach the Paris Agreement's target**. The European Union needs an ambitious climate and energy policy setting ourselves on a path for a decarbonised future.

Modelling calculations conducted by the IRP⁵⁰ demonstrate that strong climate change action, if coupled with resource efficiency policies, would have positive effects on economic development. There is also a **business case for climate action** that can lead to lower operational costs, greater resilience of energy supply, improved security of supply of raw materials and better connection with consumers. The EU should explore this positive approach with all stakeholders and help build business opportunities to speed up implementation.

⁴⁸ For instance: EU faced climate-related economic losses of EUR 11.6 billion in 2015 according to Eurostat's latest statistics.

⁴⁹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate/eu-greenhouse-gas-inventory/eu-greenhouse-gas-inventory-2016>

⁵⁰ <http://www.resourcepanel.org/>

Key recommendations

- ❖ First of all, the EU needs to **align its climate and energy targets** for the medium and long-term (2020, 2030, 2040 and 2050) with a cost-effective path towards the agreed objective of pursuing efforts to limit global temperature increase to **1.5°C** above pre-industrial levels within the scope of the Paris Agreement.
- ❖ The **European Union budget spending needs to encourage sustainable projects** that advance the decarbonisation of the economy and that embrace challenges related to the environment and society at the same level as the economy. The EU should continue to take bold steps in this area of sustainable finance to ensure public finance is aligned with low carbon and climate resilient development.
- ❖ For **energy policy**, this would require a **swift acceleration in phasing out of coal by 2030** and of **other fossil fuels as soon as possible thereafter**. This means that full RES integration and the necessary grid upgrades are in place in order to avoid any lock-in of new fossil fuel generation. Aware of the current status of Member States' energy systems, a **timely transition** requires a set of measures and incentives aimed at investing in sustainable energy sources. These include carbon neutral electricity coupled with electrification of demand sectors and energy efficiency measures which will promote a reduction of energy use as well as active and empowered consumers at the centre of the energy transition. All these will have to be achieved making sure that renewable energy production projects do not translate into human rights violations or impair local communities' land and food rights in the Global South.
- ❖ The EU should also encourage the take up of the most **appropriate renewable energy solutions** in terms of environment and health, **for instance taking into account local air quality**.
- ❖ **External energy policy** is dominated by concerns over the **security of gas supply**. While natural gas will continue to play a role in the short to medium term, we have to engage in a **phasing out** while ensuring a just transition.
- ❖ **Transport** policy has a large potential to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and decrease air pollution. It is **the only sector in which GHG levels have not fallen compared with 1990 levels**. Urgent action to **decrease traffic congestion, encourage infrastructure for low-emitting sectors including bikes and walking, introduce comprehensive mobility plans and reduce the use of cars** is vital and offers rapid co-benefits for health and well-being, not least via active mobility. Transport via waterways and railways as better alternatives should be promoted. Efficient, effective and sustainable transport systems will also instrumental for the EU's economic competitiveness, its territorial cohesion and the health of citizens.

- ❖ In Europe, the agriculture sector has decreased its greenhouse gas emissions by 24% since 1990, while increasing its output⁵¹. However, **food systems**⁵² as a whole are responsible for between a quarter and a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions⁵³. To date, food systems have received only limited attention as a driver of climate change, which risks undermining climate mitigation efforts. An analytical framework is needed to map the significant co-benefits and synergies of food system transition strategies, as well as the potential trade-offs involved and how they could be minimised.
- ❖ The European Union should also champion adaptation and resilience to climate change impacts in both EU and partner countries. This is especially valid for urban settlements, mountainous and coastal regions, infrastructure and agriculture. These are increasingly vulnerable to adverse weather events and the latter must remain capable of guaranteeing a certain food production level in accordance with the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. The EU should support in particular the uptake of **nature-based solutions** (e.g. terrestrial and coastal ecosystem restoration and halting deforestation) as an **accessible and cost-effective means of tackling climate change**. The **links between climate change adaptation and mitigation** should also be developed and shared within the EU and with developing countries.

d. FOOD, FARMING AND LAND-USE INCLUDING COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)

The EU needs a sustainable food, farming and land-use policy to preserve farming land, protect biodiversity and ensure a decent living for farmers and future farmers inside and outside the EU. **Seeking policy coherence for sustainable development** has to be the driving force in the design of such a policy, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP.) This future policy has to integrate and build on existing legislation and strategies including those on the economic development of rural areas, biodiversity, climate, water, and health. The EU's agricultural and food sectors can make a very significant contribution towards the transition to sustainability, and by **making the next CAP deliver better on the SDGs**, its legitimacy will be reinforced.⁵⁴

This challenge needs solutions that build upon sustainably produced high quality food, resource efficiency and conservation, productivity and competitiveness that provide economic, environmental and social co-benefits in a changing context. Here, **awareness, innovation and climate-smart farming technologies along with other sustainable farming practices** (agroecology, high-nature-value farming, organic farming) will further contribute to the sectors' performance regarding the

⁵¹ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/mp-mb-010_en.pdf

⁵² A food system gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes [HLPE, 2014. Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Adapted from a range of other definitions (e.g. Ericksen, 2008; Ericksen et al., 2010; Ingram, 2011; IPCC, 2014)].

⁵³ For example, the JRC has done a study attributing to final consumer in the food category 31% of EU GHG emissions. <http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/eur22284en.pdf>

The Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Safety (CCAFS) gives the following figure 19%-29% <https://ccafs.cgiar.org/bigfacts/#theme=food-emissions>

⁵⁴ Agriculture is a significant determinant of at least 13 of the SDGs, including SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15.

management and conservation of limited resources. Last but not least, these solutions are crucial for achieving our commitments linked to food production, environmental protection and climate action under the scope of the Paris Agreement⁵⁵, other global agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the SDGs.

In addition, considering the EU's standing as a large exporter and importer in the agricultural sector, efforts should be directed to promoting a balanced, rules-based and inclusive **trade agenda based on mutual benefits, especially when trading with developing countries**. This calls for shifting priorities towards a trade strategy that contributes to raising production and investment standards globally and is fair and socially and environmentally viable in Europe as well as in third countries.

Key recommendations

- ❖ Support the CAP's shift towards a performance-oriented and simpler policy, with measurable objectives in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. A more systemic approach to evaluate the external impact of the policy and its instruments, addressing and correcting adverse impacts on developing countries' agriculture and food sectors while strengthening the positive impact on global food security and climate change based on emission intensities and resource efficiency should be pursued.
- ❖ A clear framework to ensure accountability of Member States and to provide a high EU added value of the CAP will be required, given the introduction of a greater degree of subsidiarity for Member States in this policy.
- ❖ Build upon the existing minimum environmental requirements applicable to all CAP recipients and ensure that the new green architecture in the future CAP and the enhanced conditionality is applicable to all and by all farmers. If the future CAP manages to steer the transition to more sustainable farming, it would maximise and recognise the key role that agriculture and land management will play in achieving the Union's economic, social and environmental objectives.
- ❖ Ensure that all EU policies on food, farming and land-use align with the EU's Treaty mandate to ensure a high level of human health protection in all its policies (Article 168 TFEU). This means that investments under the new CAP should contribute to a high level of human health in particular by contributing to tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR), poor air quality through reduction of ammonia emissions, and by achieving sustainable and healthy diets for all.
- ❖ It is crucial to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community (Article 39 TFEU), by increasing the individual earnings of farmers with low income and reducing farmers'

⁵⁵ Article 2 of the Paris Agreement describes the scope of the agreement. "(a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;" (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;" A verbatim reference regarding food production is enshrined in SDG 13 on climate change.

dependence on subsidies so that the EU can secure its own food production and prevent land abandonment where it would lead to a loss of environmental, cultural and social public goods.

- ❖ It is therefore important to **incentivise farmers and the agrifood sector to work on SDGs** together with their customers and local communities. Public income support should target non-polluting activities, the provision of public goods and ecosystem services, and support biodiversity while guaranteeing a decent living for farmers. The EU should make sure that all EU investment in agriculture is sustainable in all three dimensions of sustainable development while supporting farmers in the transition to sustainable food systems by providing enabling mechanisms.
- ❖ Holistic approaches that create and build upon science-based synergies between competitiveness as well as environmental and climate change adaptation and mitigation, must be sought and supported. In that regard, research & innovation as well as training and advisory services are essential to further improve the sectors' resource efficiency and conservation while recognising, accounting and improving positive externalities of agriculture (carbon removals in soil and vegetation, soil biodiversity, ecosystem services, etc.) as well as decreasing negative externalities (pollution, use of pesticides, etc.).

The EU should contribute to **making global value chains truly sustainable** and inclusive, focusing on the right to food, water and land, promoting the improvement of the livelihoods of smallholder farming communities⁵⁶ and indigenous peoples, and reducing negative impacts on ecosystems and natural habitats while increasing the positive ones. In particular, the EU should review its approach to markets and value chains with the CFS recommendations in mind. It should contribute to the effort underway to increase the understanding and knowledge of territorial markets by collecting comprehensive data on such markets – both rural and urban, formal and informal – in order to strengthen their functioning and ability to deliver nutritious and affordable food, and to improve the evidence base for policy-making.

e. COHESION POLICY

Cohesion policy is a major EU investment tool to support the implementation of the SDGs and to achieve the EU Treaty objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion. It is one of the most visible European Union policies at local and regional level, demonstrating the benefits of the EU to its citizens. It finances projects to reduce disparities between the levels of development of various regions, helping to decrease inequalities and leaving no-one behind – including remote and declining industrial regions.

⁵⁶ Smallholders, including those that are family farmers – women and men – include those that are small-scale producers and processors, pastoralists, artisans, fishers, community closely dependant on forests, indigenous peoples and agricultural workers.

Source: FAO

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/OEWG_Small/CFS_Connecting_Smallholders_to_Markets_Final_Draft.pdf

The shared management that features under cohesion policy also supports ownership among local and regional authorities. This multi-level governance and partnership approach is essential for the localisation (and regionalisation) of the SDGs. With estimates showing that 65% of the 169 targets underpinning the 17 SDGs cannot be reached without engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments⁵⁷, cohesion policy will be important to support the delivery of Agenda 2030 for people. It is the only EU policy that is delivered via partnership and long-term planning, and that fosters integrated sustainable strategies at regional and local level.

Key recommendations

Localise SDGs

Post-2020 cohesion policy should strengthen its direct support to subnational governments and local communities by ensuring enhanced financing and tailored instruments for integrated territorial development, boosting integrated SDG implementation on the ground. This must recognise that the localisation of the SDGs is a political process that includes empowering subnational governments and local communities to take action. Accordingly, the development and implementation of local and territorial strategies aiming at integrated and sustainable development, as well as education for sustainable development and capacity building of local administration for the SDGs, should be supported through cohesion policy.

Urban Areas

The SDGs provide an integrated and clear roadmap for long-term city planning and an opportunity to help cities target their development priorities, including how they work with the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders in their communities. The Urban Agenda of the EU will be instrumental in this respect; it involves cities more closely at all stages of the preparation of relevant policies, as well as in improving the impact of EU funds and EU regulations at the local level so that the EU can respond more effectively to the changes that towns and cities are undergoing. Future cohesion policy should support the implementation of the Urban Agenda, covering all urban dimensions of the SDGs, and addressed to all urban areas following the principles of universal design and accessibility for all.

Promote social objectives in cohesion policy

A strong European Social Fund must remain a part of the European Structural and Investment Funds, in order to fulfil Agenda 2030's principle of leaving no-one behind. Moreover, a holistic approach to the European Social Fund must go beyond just employment and work towards social inclusion. Support to local governments and regional authorities must involve targeting the most vulnerable and marginalised groups as a priority. The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should

⁵⁷ The OECD quoting the UN Sustainable Development Solution Network in *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: A role for Cities and Regions to leave no-one behind* (2017) OECD.

provide the possibility to invest in services, particularly community-based services, to ensure that all families and citizens can access basic support (including social, housing, health, childcare, transport, communications, etc.) in their local areas, while ensuring that public investment in these areas is promoted and protected.

Transformation through cohesion policy

Cohesion policy investments should be linked to long-term sustainable development objectives and should be used to incentivise greener, more sustainable infrastructure, including investment in low carbon, affordable and sustainable public transport. Large infrastructure investments should not harm ecologically sensitive areas or promote unsustainable practices and for any possible impacts on the environment, follow the mitigation hierarchy. European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund managing authorities should be empowered and encouraged to fund sustainably transformative programmes. To assist meaningful transformation that benefits people on the ground, organising strong partnerships with civil society at all programming stages of the funding process is essential.

Rural Areas

The European Regional Development Policy should better encourage integrated sustainable investments for infrastructure and services in rural areas in close coordination with the Rural Development Fund and the European Social Fund. Local strategies, in the form of the existing Integrated Territorial Investments and Community-Led Local Development tools, should be developed and endorsed by the local or territorial authorities responsible.

Chapter V – Next Steps and the Future of the European SDG Platform

Through this platform, we have laid the foundations of a unique European sustainability dialogue. Together we have learned how the SDGs form a common narrative and unique compass to help each stakeholder to transform his or her business model and to collaborate with others. They set a common direction for Europe to turn global goals into local solutions that can address the complexity and speed of our societal changes and people's expectations.

a. STEP 1 - INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY

An immediate next step for all is to pay tribute to the thousands of people, professionals, enterprises and cities that are already translating the Sustainable Development Goals into daily practical solutions and services. The platform will therefore contribute to the development and visibility of the **European Sustainability Awards**. However, more is needed. The platform will further discuss the interesting measures that several members have advanced to make the process of implementing the SDGs more **inclusive and participatory**. We also propose that these awards be part of a wider **European Campaign** – possibly every two years – aimed at citizens, consumers, enterprises and stakeholders in Europe, showing how the SDGs can be integrated into their day-to-

day life and practice, and explaining how they can participate. We also propose that for the **European Year in 2022 or 2027**, the European Union should choose to address the SDGs. The aim is to associate the next 65 or 70 years of the European Union with a bold message: that sustainability is a foundational pillar of Europe's future peace, prosperity and leadership in the world.

b. STEP 2 - TOWARDS AN EU SDG PLATFORM 2030

A second step, after the adoption of the Reflection Paper, is our offer to discuss the future of the platform together with the European Commission, bearing in mind how it could bridge with other interested European institutions. For instance, we would like to further discuss how in the future through this platform we could:

1. reinforce an **inclusive, participatory and policy coherence approach** to the long-term *Sustainable Europe 2030* strategy;
2. enhance the European capacity to **monitor overall progress on the SDGs**;
3. develop a 2019-2024 action plan supporting stakeholders in order to enhance **awareness, peer learning, capacity building and collaboration on the SDGs**, and report on their **impact**;
4. establish a continuous exchange with **national SDG multi-stakeholder platforms** and support their creation where they do not yet exist;
5. play a supportive role in presenting EU positions in the context of the **European Council, European Parliament and United Nations**.

In the future, the platform should liaise with and not duplicate any other regular sectoral or topical dialogues with stakeholders at European level.

c. STEP 3 – A PLATFORM CALL TO EUROPEAN LEADERS AND PARTIES

Finally, we the stakeholders of the platform will address a **special call to European leaders and parties**, to explore how before and after the European elections we can further align our respective agendas on a Sustainable Europe 2030.

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