ESDN Conference 2025 Discussion Paper

Post-2030 Agenda: 10 Years of SDG Implementation and Ideas for a Future Agenda

What has worked well, what has not worked well, and what is next?

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Table of contents

Introduction

This Discussion Paper provides participants of the ESDN Conference 2025 with background information on the conference theme, an overview of the topics to be addressed by speakers and presenters, and a description of how the conference's interactive elements will be organized.

The 2025 conference focuses on **"Post-2030 Agenda: 10 Years of SDG Implementation and Ideas for a Future Agenda – What has worked well, what has not, and what comes next?"** It will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark on **25–26 November 2025** and is organized by the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) in cooperation with Nordregio and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

With a decade of SDG implementation behind us, this is an important moment to reflect on what has progressed, where challenges remain, and what the final five years of the 2030 Agenda should prioritize. At the same time, the global community must begin to consider what should follow the current agenda: **Which mechanisms, partnerships, and processes developed over the last ten years have proven effective? What elements should shape a future sustainable development framework?** Through keynote presentations, panel discussions, and two rounds of ESDN Exchange Spaces showcasing good practices, the conference aims to provide insights and potential answers to these questions. Details on the keynote speakers and Exchange Space topics are provided in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 1 reviews progress on implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in Europe over the past decade and assesses the prospects of achieving the goals by 2030, including what the Global Sustainable Development Reports say (2019 & 2023), the Eurostat 2025 SDG Report, and the SDSN 2025 edition of the Europe Report. It will introduce the presentations of Session 1 and provide short excerpts from keynote speakers from the UNDP Nordic Representation Office, the research community, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the OECD.

Chapter 2 presents good practice examples of SDG implementation from national and subnational levels, featured in the first set of ESDN Exchange Spaces. Participants may choose between nine cases across two discussion rounds (45 minutes each). Each table lead will introduce their case or topic for 10–15 minutes, followed by approximately 30 minutes of dialogue with participants. After each round, participants will move to a second table of their choice. Short descriptions of all Exchange Space interventions are provided to help participants decide which discussions they wish to join. To enrich the Exchange Spaces, participants are encouraged to reflect in advance on questions or experiences from their own contexts that they may wish to share.

Chapter 3 turns to Day 2 of the conference, shifting the focus from retrospective analysis to forward-looking discussions on the **Post-2030 Agenda**. This chapter includes contributions from Session 2 keynote speakers from the European Environment Agency (EEA), SDSN Germany, the Finnish Prime Minister's Office, and youth representatives from ReGeneration 2030.

Chapter 4 introduces the second round of Exchange Spaces, which explores the Post-2030 Agenda from diverse stakeholder perspectives. These sessions will follow the same format as those on Day 1. Short texts for each of the eight discussion tables are provided.

Throughout the conference, organizers will engage participants using Mentimeter to gather reflections and stimulate interactive dialogue on this complex and evolving topic.

Following the event, the ESDN will publish an **ESDN Policy Note** summarizing the main findings, ideas, and recommendations emerging from the presentations, panel discussions, and Exchange Spaces. PowerPoint presentations will be made available on the ESDN website (in PDF format) and shared with participants once permission has been obtained from the speakers.

Chapter 1: 2030 Agenda & SDG Implementation since 2015 – Where does Europe stand?

This chapter will take a short look into what the 2019 & 2023 Global Sustainable Development Reports (GSDRs), the 2025 Eurostat SDG Report, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) 2025 Europe Report say about where Europe currently stands when it comes to implementation. Participants are fortunate to have one of the scientists who worked on the 2023 GSDR at the conference and providing the second keynote of session 1, as well as many colleagues from SDSN and the country chapters.

Global Sustainable Development Reports

Europe is relatively advanced on many social and governance-type SDG targets (health, education, institutions), but significant gaps remain — especially on environmental goals, consumption-based impacts, stubborn inequalities and the need to manage major shocks (energy, cost-of-living, and the war in Ukraine). The two GSDRs (2019 & 2023) call for systems-level transformations and better policy integration.

Both reports emphasize that European progress on some SDGs can create trade-offs for others (for example, energy and industry policy choices affecting biodiversity or global spillovers). The 2023 GSDR especially frames progress as requiring systemic transformations that manage SDG interlinkages rather than tackling goals in silos.

Shocks have set back or complicated SDG implementation. The 2023 GSDR documents how recurrent crises (COVID-19 after-effects, the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine) have made SDG delivery harder in 2022–2023 for the UNECE/EU region, by disrupting supply, finance and energy systems and increasing fiscal pressure. The 2023 report names these crises as factors that can push targets further away unless transformational measures are taken.

The ESDN also recognized that transformational measures need to be taken and why the 2024 Conference focused on that topic. These transformations should remain the focus over the next 5 years to get as close as possible to achieving the SDGs.

Eurostat 2025 SDG Report

The most recent Eurostat report on the SDGs "Sustainable development in the European Union Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context 2025 edition" was published in June 2025. While the EU remains committed to the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs, the most recent report shows that:

- Significant progress has been made towards the objectives and targets related to reduced inequalities (SDG 10), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and quality education (SDG 4).
- The EU has also made progress towards most of the other SDGs, but at a slower pace. Among the group of goals with moderate progress, the EU has performed best for gender

equality (SDG 5), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) and zero hunger (SDG 2).

- However, the report highlights that there is no significant progress for life below water (SDG 14), due to the slow expansion of marine protected areas as well as the worsening health of the ocean. A movement away from the sustainable development objectives has been observed for clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) and life on land (SDG 15). Progress towards SDG 6 has been unfavorably affected by water stress, whereas development in SDG 15 has been negatively impacted by land degradation and loss of biodiversity.[1]

Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Europe Report 2025

According to the Europe Sustainable Development Report's 2025 edition, conducted and published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), European countries occupy 19 out of the top 20 places in the SDG Index. However, the Report goes on to further elaborate that the results are uneven among European countries. Furthermore, many dimensions of sustainable development have not shown enough progress since 2015. Progress has been slowing down during the period 2020-2023 when compared to the period 2016-2019. The performance of some European countries has also declined slightly.[2]

SDSN has been able to identify five major SDG challenges faced by the EU:

1. Stagnation and even reversal of progress on Leave-No-One-Behind indicators since 2020, measuring within-country inequalities in opportunities, well-being and equity in access to and quality of services.
2. Persisting challenges related to environmental and biodiversity goals, including sustainable food and land systems.
3. Negative impacts from unsustainable consumption and supply chains via international spillover effects.
4. Large gaps and a slow pace of convergence in SDG outcomes across European countries.
5. Slow progress and even reversal in progress on some indicators.[3]

Conference Keynote Presentations

Below are the short excerpts from Session 1's keynote presenters. The topics covered by our keynotes will range from reflecting on the past 10 years of implementation, to what we still need to accomplish by 2030 and beyond, as well as look at financing sustainable development and the governance mechanisms we will undoubtedly need in a world that is changing extremely rapidly.

[1] Eurostat, Sustainable Development in the European Union: Monitoring Report on Progress towards the SDGs in an EU Context, 2025 Edition (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025). p. 6.
[2] Lafortune, Guillaume and Grayson Fuller (2025). Europe Sustainable Development Report 2025: SDG Priorities for the New EU Leadership. Paris: SDSN and Dublin: Dublin University Press. p. 5.
[3] Ibid. p. 6.

10 Years of SDG Implementation and Ideas for a Future Generation

***Henrik Fredborg Larsen**, Director, UNDP Nordic Representation Office, Denmark*

The SDGs themselves are a remarkable global UN achievement, rooted in the principles of an integrated approach, universality, and leaving no-one behind, they remain the world's North Star for sustainable development.

While the past decade has seen major progress—declines in extreme poverty, global health breakthroughs, more girls in school, and stronger democratic governance—these gains are uneven: one in ten people remain in extreme poverty, CO2 emissions continue to rise, a quarter live in fragile contexts, and only 20 percent of SDG targets are on track.

The current setbacks coupled with the growing number of conflicts, geopolitical pressures, rising complexity of interlinked development challenges and shrinking development funds, should motivate the world to supercharging the SDGs rather than redefining them.

Guided by the Pact for the Future, efforts must focus on financial reforms, stronger climate commitments, greater engagement of youth, utilization of opportunities presented by new technology, digitalization and innovation, and transforming global governance.

Europe has a critical role to play and much to gain. Europe needs to lead by example and deliver on its promises to developing countries to sustain trust in the value of multilateralism and to maintain its geopolitical relevance.

Ten years into the SDGs, the world has changed, and human insecurity has risen. Despite setbacks, the SDGs remain as relevant as ever, not only as a development agenda but as a smart investment in security. Addressing the root causes of instability is the smartest security policy we can pursue.

Global Perspective – What has the world done well, and where do we need to see improvement for any post-2030 Agenda?

***Åsa Persson**, Strategic Advisor and Researcher, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Climate Action Centre & Chair of the Swedish Climate Policy Council, Sweden*

In this talk, we will look at the latest SDG progress reports and the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report to assess where the world is collectively doing well and where improvement is needed. We will consider patterns, such as the stronger progress on targets related to technological uptake and the lack of .progress on many of the environmental targets, and what might explain these patterns. In addition, we will explore the counterfactual; where would the world have been without Agenda 2030 and SDG framework?

Looking forward to the next big stock-take moment of the SDG Summit in 2027, which will also kick off discussions on a sustainable development agenda beyond 2030, I will review ideas and proposals so far from academia. I will suggest some priorities for the process ahead, including the role of the SDGs as a global 'results framework', how to better incorporate the time dimension in global agreements on

sustainable development, the connection to the UN reform agenda and new visions for multilateralism, and if and how 'less is more'.

Financing Sustainable Development in Europe and Beyond

***Andrija Erac**, Global Head of Networks, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, France*

Despite the rise in geopolitical tensions, the escalation of the climate crisis, and the widening of global inequalities, the world does overwhelmingly recognize the Sustainable Development Goals as the vital pathway to peace, equity, and well-being. Many countries are making significant progress, but much more can be accomplished through stepped-up investments in education, green technologies, and digital solutions. Above all, we need peace and global cooperation to achieve the SDGs.

For many developing countries, a lack of fiscal space is the major obstacle to SDG progress. Roughly half the world's population lives in countries that cannot invest adequately in sustainable development due to debt burdens and a lack of access to affordable, long-term capital. Global public goods are vastly underfinanced.

Europe and other High-income UN member states, have a special responsibility, both as a matter of distributive justice – that the rich not leave the poor behind – and as a matter of reparative justice – that those countries that contributed most to greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental harms in the past must do the most to curb their emissions in the future and to compensate the other countries for the damages their past actions have caused.

First, UN member states must adequately finance the UN system itself. Second, UN member states must increase their official financing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the lead-up to 2030, including providing debt relief as needed to create the fiscal space to achieve them. Third, UN member states must increase their financing of the global commons. Fourth, UN member states must agree on critical reforms of the international financial markets to ensure that world savings flow to countries with the highest investment returns and the highest growth prospects.

Governance Mechanisms needed for a Post-2030 Agenda

***Ernesto Soria Morales**, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of Programme, Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, Global Partnerships, Inclusion and Justice Division, OECD Public Governance Directorate, France*

As the 2030 Agenda nears its deadline, the international community faces a critical question: what governance systems will be needed to drive sustainable development beyond 2030 in an increasingly complex and uncertain world? The next global framework will not simply involve setting new goals. It will require rethinking how decisions are made, coordinated, and implemented across sectors, levels of government, and borders. A key challenge will be managing the deep global interdependence of policy choices.

This keynote will explore why governance matters beyond 2030, starting with persistent gaps - fragmented policies, weak accountability, and limited institutional capacity - and emerging pressures such as polycrises, planetary boundaries, and rapid technological change. These dynamics call for governance systems that are integrated, adaptive, and resilient.

The presentation will focus on governance enablers as key mechanisms for aligning policy choices that create benefits across countries and generations. Strengthening these enablers is vital for managing the economic, social, and environmental foundations on which economies, societies, and the planet depend.

Looking ahead to milestones such as the 2027 SDG Summit, the keynote will highlight opportunities to shape governance frameworks capable of delivering on global commitments and translating future sustainability goals into real-world impact. Participants will be invited to reflect on a central question: What governance mechanisms will ensure that the next generation of global goals leads to tangible progress across countries and generations?

A panel discussion with these four keynote speakers will take place directly afterwards. The organizational team will be doing its best to feed questions that participants submitted when registering for the conference into the discussions, as well as through Mentimeter, so everyone will be able to ask questions, and even thumbs up questions from others, so we can see the burning questions in real time.

Chapter 2: ESDN Exchange Space 1: Good practices from government (national, subnational, local, and urban)

In the first Exchange Space, participants will be able to choose from nine different good practice cases. The Exchange Space will take place over two rounds, where each round is 45 minutes long. Each table will have a table lead(s), who will present their case or discussion topic for 10-15 minutes. This is then followed by around 30 minutes for more in-depth discussions with participants around the tables. Once the first round is over, participants will have the chance to visit one more table and the process repeats.

Short texts of the Exchange Space interventions are provided below. It is highly encouraged, therefore, to think about which topics and tables interest you the most. To make the discussions more fruitful after when it comes to the 30-minute discussions, please think about potential questions to ask the table leads, and bring any relevant ideas or examples you might have from your own country or context to share at the table. Please keep in mind that each table will undoubtedly be interesting and have something to offer, so if some tables seem like they are crowded, please consider moving to a less crowded table. After the two rounds are over, the table leads will summarize the discussions that took place at their tables.

Table 1: Finland - Key challenges and opportunities for advancing social development beyond the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

***Taru Savolainen**, ESDN Vice President, Deputy Secretary General of the Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development, Prime Minister's Office, Finland*

&

***Satu Leino**, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland*

The Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, reaffirms global commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and calls for urgent action to implement all the SDGs. At the same time, the Pact recognizes the need to plan for the long-term. According to its paragraph 12 (b) the UN General Assembly invites the HLPF, under the auspices of the General Assembly, to consider in September 2027 how the global community will advance sustainable development by 2030 and beyond. This suggests that the 2027 SDG Summit may initiate the negotiation process for arrangements on a post-2030 agenda.

The Pact for the Future also mandated the UN Secretary-General to appoint a High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP to develop proposals for measuring progress by placing people, planet, and prosperity at its center. The Pact also calls for a subsequent intergovernmental process to consider the Group's recommendations. The Beyond GDP initiative supports efforts to measure sustainable development in ways that consider all elements of sustainability in a more equal manner.

The discussions on a post-2030 agenda will follow the UN80 initiative, which aims to reform the UN system, its structures and programs, including a review of all its mandates. They will also take place under a new UN Secretary General and at a time when multilateralism and the UN system are likely to continue to be challenged by multiple crises and actors.

- Could you share your perspectives and priorities for how our country might prepare for the upcoming post-Agenda 2030 discussions? How do you envision the structure and priorities of the next global sustainability framework?
- What are the key challenges and opportunities for advancing social development beyond the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda?
- How is the transformation of multilateral cooperation influencing prioritizing sustainable and inclusive development?
- In what ways does the evolving European security situation affect international efforts to promote sustainable development and global solidarity?
- What are the key national level drivers and developments that impact preparing for the post-Agenda2030 discussions?
- What kind of national level policies and innovative approaches to SDG implementation do you find useful and important?

Table 2: Results of the Austrian SDG Dialogue Forums

***Anna Muner-Bretter**, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Federal Chancellery, Austria*
&
***Melina Matzawrakos**, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, Austria*

On 23 October 2025, the Austrian Federal Administration, together with civil society (SDG Watch Austria) and the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, held the SDG Dialogue Forum in Vienna under the title *"*2030 in Sight – Perspectives for the Implementation of the SDGs in the Next Five Years and Beyond."

Around 120 participants took part to discuss the final stretch toward 2030 and the shaping of a Post-2030 Agenda. The aim of the yearly held Forum is to discuss challenges on SDG implementation in Austria while considering recent developments from the "outside" (UN and EU level).

Andrew Sherriff, from the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) presented three possible scenarios for the future of the 2030 Agenda:

1. Extension of the 2030 Agenda to 2040 or 2050 with minimal adjustments;
2. No new global agreement, leading to a fragmented patchwork of regional and thematic initiatives; or
3. A new, ambitious global accord addressing thematic, financial, and implementation gaps.

Following this, discussions at World Café tables focused on concrete actions and partnerships.

The main messages included:

- Financing for Development: Sustainable financing requires not only funds but effective frameworks and stronger engagement of both the private sector and official development cooperation.
- Youth Participation: Youth involvement must be supported by legal structures, sufficient resources, transparency, and early inclusion in decision-making.
- SDG Localisation: Local and regional SDG actions need greater visibility and improved cooperation across all levels of government, esp. Provinces and Cities.

- OECD Guidelines for responsible business practices: Highlighting best practices can strengthen economic sustainability, calling for qualitative progress in using the OECD Guidelines.
- AT tool for a Climate Check: The Climate Check should serve as a key mechanism for policy coherence through systematic assessment of climate impacts.
- Leaving No One Behind: Social cohesion, solidarity, and health equity must remain central, nationally and globally.
- Culture & SDGs: Culture contributes to all SDGs and should be recognized as a stand-alone goal in the Post-2030 Agenda.

The Forum concluded with a call to intensify efforts toward 2030 while collectively shaping the sustainable agenda beyond it.

Table 3: Romania's Good Practices in Implementing SDGs

***Ștefania Deak**, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Head of Unit - Coordination, Implementation of Sustainable Development, Prime Minister's Office – Department of Sustainable Development, Romania*

This Exchange Space table will focus on five good practice cases of how Romania has been implementing the SDGs over the past 10 years. It will focus on the institutional framework for the SDGs, strategic documents, such as the National Action Plan and the Sustainable Development Strategy, reporting on the SDGs, Network Hubs for Sustainable Development, and building capacities within the public administration for sustainable development at the national and subnational level.

Table 4: Wales – 10 Years of the Well-being of Future Generations Act: Putting the Sustainable Development Principle into legislation

***Rae Cornish**, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Deputy Director - Sustainable Futures, Welsh Government, Wales*

Wales was the first country in the world to legislate for the SDGs, through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act in 2015. This Exchange Space table will share practices, lessons, and opportunities for collaboration and focus on embedding SDGs in legislation, institutional innovations, good practices, and lessons learned.

Table 5: Norway - White paper, Green future – can citizens' panels accelerate sustainable development?

***Jesper-Tangenes Bæverfjord**, Head of Analytics and Evaluation, Ministry of Digitalisation and Public Governance, Norway*

This summer, Norway published its latest white paper on the SDGs, which provides an overview of Norway's progress toward the goals, the main challenges, and the path ahead towards 2030. Based on data from Statistics Norway and assessments by responsible ministries, Norway is performing well—especially on goals related to infrastructure, energy, education, gender equality, and strong institutions. However, Norway's material consumption comes with several challenges. Consumption is connected to high waste levels and issues related to nutrition, resource use, climate, and biodiversity. Thus, reducing

consumption is essential for Norway to achieve the SDGs by 2030, alongside efforts to reduce crime and promote public health.

To strengthen democratic engagement, the government introduced Norway's first national citizens' panel as part of the white paper. The panel, consisting of 54 citizens, was tasked with answering: "How can we collectively reduce overconsumption while maintaining a good quality of life?"

At our exchange table we will share findings from the white paper, lessons learned and reflections from the process. In addition, the exchange table will discuss citizens' panels and how other means of democratic engagements can contribute to boost trust in public institutions and to accelerate sustainable development.

Table 6: Insights from the Nordic Local Level on Advancing the 2030 Agenda and Shaping the Post- 2030 Agenda

***Nora Sánchez Gassen**, Senior Research Fellow, Nordregio, Sweden*
&
***Anna Berlina**, Research Consultant, Nordregio, Sweden*

As the global community begins to shape the Post 2030 Development Agenda, this project gathers insights from Nordic municipalities, Local and Regional Government Associations (LRGAs), and youth representatives to ensure local priorities are reflected. Through focus group discussions across the Nordic countries, we explored the benefits and challenges of the current Agenda 2030 and how best to accelerate progress towards the global goals in the remaining years. We also reflected on what kind of global framework could best support local sustainability efforts after 2030.

At our exchange space table, we will share the results of these discussions and invite participants to reflect on whether the findings resonate with their own experiences of working with the global agenda. The session offers an opportunity to compare lessons learned, discuss the support municipalities need to continue advancing the SDGs, and consider how local perspectives can inform the next stage of international sustainability policy.

Table 7: SDG46-Network

***Eveliina Kiema-Majanen**, Senior advisor on SDGs and Project Manager, Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities, Finland*
&
***Sanna Mari Huikuri**, Development Manager, City Representative – Tampere, Finland*

The six largest cities in Finland—Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa, Oulu and Turku—are leaders in sustainable development and have a long tradition of cooperation within the 2030 Agenda and previous frameworks. They have coached each other to create better voluntary local reviews (VLRs) and shared good practices in localizing and steering the SDGs. Together, they have produced 15 VLRs, including five reports submitted in 2025.

To drive systemic change locally, the six cities formed the SDG46 network, which is coordinated by the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities (AFCM). Within this network, they have co-created SDG tools and guides for holistic and strategic steering of the SDGs in cities and city groups.

In this Exchange Space, the cooperation and cocreation, the benefits and challenges of such a city network project are discussed. The importance of multilevel cooperation (local-national-global) is also addressed. Any other cases and examples of city network projects are welcomed to discussion.

Table 8: Preparing for the Post-2030 Agenda – Looking at the subnational, local, and urban levels

***Matthew Bach**, Regional Director, ICLEI-Europe, Germany*

Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda demonstrate that success depends on the involvement and leadership of subnational actors, such as cities, towns and regions. Their involvement extends far beyond SDG 11 to encompass all 17 goals, as highlighted by nearly 400 Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). As the question of the post-2030 agenda becomes increasingly urgent, subnational actors emphasize the importance of moving towards a unified global framework that can track and promote progress towards truly integrated sustainable development. Institutionalizing the contributions of local governments and ensuring their data and experiences shape the next generation of targets, empowers subnational actors and delivers meaningful progress for people and the planet.

Table 9: Importance of Stronger Youth Participation at the Regional Level – Case Study Styria

***Sabine Schneeberger**, SDG Coordinator – Styria, Austria*
&
***Marvin Huber**, ESDN Youth Network Representative, Austria*

On 17 October 2025, the event Youth Participation in the post-2030-Agenda-Process took place in Graz, organized at the invitation of the Sustainability Coordination of the Office of the Regional Government of Styria in Austria. The event involved the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, Welthaus Graz, Naturfreunde International, the Afro-Asian Institute Graz, beteiligung.st, and SDG-Ambassadors. The main focus was on how young people can actively shape the period beyond 2030. Following a video message from former President of Austria Heinz Fischer, ESDN Youth Representative Marvin Huber opened the event with a keynote on youth participation and sustainable development.

In the subsequent interactive panel youth engagement in sustainability processes at local, national and international levels was discussed. The keynote, panel, and interactive formats provided space for exchange on key topics such as climate change, social justice and mental health. The event was conducted according to the Green Events Styria criteria for sustainable event management and clearly demonstrated that young voices are central to shaping a sustainable future.

Chapter 3: Visions for the Post-2030 Global Goals

This chapter focuses on the keynote presentations from Session 2 of the conference and the second Exchange Space tables. The purpose of Day 2 of the conference is to move from the past 10 years of implementation to the future. This entails the next five years, as well as beyond 2030 and the current 2030 Agenda's implementation schedule. Participants will hear from colleagues from the European Environment Agency, SDSN Germany, the Finnish Government, and from Nordic Youth Representatives.

This is followed by the Exchange Space tables with members from stakeholder groups. Participants will learn more about what is happening on the ground with respect to discussions on Post-2030.

Conference Keynote Presentations

Below are the short excerpts from Session 2's keynote presenters. The topics covered by our keynoters will have a more future oriented framing and focus on how the situation today needs to change and what it means for the future of sustainable development moving forward, hopefully taking with us all the useful lessons we have collectively learned, and will continue to learn over the next five years, with us for after 2030.

Europe's Environment and Climate Today and what it means for our Future

***Catherine Ganzleben**, Head of Unit on Fair and Sustainable Development, European Environment Agency, Denmark*

Europe's environment and climate are changing, with implications for the future prosperity, security and resilience of European society. The degradation of Europe's environmental assets - water, soil, forests and seas - threatens economic sectors dependent on natural resources. Sectors like agriculture, forestry and fisheries are particularly vulnerable, where value added is generated on the basis on inputs from the natural world. We have seen droughts affecting yields of staple crops, such as olives, grapes, wheat and tomatoes, driving up prices for consumers. Both private and public sector activities across industry, tourism, energy and transport depend on natural resources and face impacts as these resources are degraded. For example, water scarcity has forced the closure of nuclear power plants and brought inland navigation to a halt, preventing the distribution of materials and goods. Looking forward, access to resources will be a decisive factor in the competitiveness of Europe's economy. At the same time, extreme weather events driven by climate change - extreme heat, droughts, floods and forest fires - are costing lives, as well as devastating homes and businesses across Europe. The majority of these costs are not insured, posing risks to our society and economy that can cascade into the financial system and generate macroeconomic shocks. Yet there are seeds of hope. The transformation of our energy system is ongoing, driven by ambitious and successful policies as well as a changing market landscape. Europe is in a position to harness innovation in clean tech, create jobs and show global leadership in the ongoing transition to sustainability.

Post-2030 Agenda Framework: Looking towards the future

***Axel Berger**, Interim Deputy Director at IDOS and Managing Director of SDSN Germany, Germany*

As preparations begin for negotiations on a global follow-up framework to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ahead of the 2027 SDG Summit, the international landscape is marked by profound geopolitical realignments that will shape both the process and substance of any new framework. This presentation examines how shifting power constellations, rising strategic rivalries, and the fragmentation of multilateral cooperation influence the interests and leverage of major actors in debates on the follow-up system beyond 2030. It assesses the strengths and limitations of the current SDG framework through a geopolitical lens, highlighting where it has held up under pressure—and where it has struggled. The talk also explores process-related requirements, emphasizing the need for renewed inclusivity, transparency, and trust-building in an era of contested global governance. By mapping options within this evolving context, the session provides a forward-looking foundation for shaping a realistic and politically attuned pathway toward the next global development framework.

Holistic Sustainability Assessment in Finland – Lessons learned

Saara Tamminen, *Chief Specialist, Sustainability Evaluations, Strategy Department, Finnish Prime Minister's Office, Finland*

Saara Tamminen from the Finnish Prime Minister's Office presented the new holistic sustainability assessment model of Finland and its first full report. In the sustainability assessment, societal sustainability is evaluated using a new five-dimensional sustainability framework covering: 1) sustainability of security, democracy and the rule of law, 2) social and health-related sustainability, 3) economic sustainability, 4) ecological sustainability and 5) human capital and cultural sustainability. In addition to evaluating development trends in different areas of the Finnish society over the past decade, the report provides insight into possible development trajectories over the next 5-10 years and proposes directions for solutions.

The report concludes that in Finland development has been in line with the objectives or clearly improving in only six out of the 35 assessed sub-areas during the past decade and moving away from the targets or otherwise deteriorating 15 sub-areas. Challenges concern especially ecological and economic sustainability. Saara also summarized some of the key lessons learned from the process, including importance of strong collaboration models and systemic and multidisciplinary approach for the work. In addition, organizational design and ways the work can impact decision-making need to be carefully considered.

Youth Viewpoint on the Post-2030 Agenda

Jannat Ara Rahman*, Youth Representative, ReGeneration 2030, Finland*
&
Lennie Jansson*, Youth Representative, ReGeneration 2030, Sweden*

The current global system has failed to deliver on the promises of the 2030 Agenda, leaving young people to inherit not just unfinished goals but a fundamentally flawed approach. From the perspective of youth, the post-2030 framework cannot be a simple update; it demands a radical system shift that moves beyond merely "greening" our current economic model. This new direction must courageously prioritize human well-being and ecological integrity over endless growth, ensuring that the burdens and benefits of this transition are shared with justice and equity at the core.

Achieving this transformation requires change in how we govern, especially at the local level. It calls for municipalities to lead by example: adopting new measures of success, rewriting urban rules to foster self-sufficient communities, and actively redistributing power. This means moving beyond consultation to genuinely share decision-making and resources with Indigenous and local communities, ensuring that the path to a sustainable future is built on a foundation of decolonized knowledge and true co-creation.

Chapter 4: ESDN Exchange Space 2: Stakeholder Visions, Reflections and Proposals for the Next Global Goals

Short texts of the Exchange Space interventions are provided below. It is highly encouraged, therefore, to think about which topics and tables interest you the most. To make the discussions more fruitful after when it comes to the 30-minute discussions, please think about potential questions to ask the table leads, and bring any relevant ideas or examples you might have from your own country or context to share at the table. Please keep in mind that each table will undoubtedly be interesting and have something to offer, so if some tables seem like they are crowded, please consider moving to a less crowded table. After the two rounds are over, the table leads will summarize the discussions that took place at their tables.

Table 1: Civil Society - Rethinking Agenda 2030

***Helene Gjerding**, Director, Danish 92-Group – Forum for Sustainable Development, Denmark*

Since 2015, the UN has been regularly reporting on the progress towards the SDGs, each time sounding the alarm about the slow pace of action and the need to intensify efforts. This year is no exception, according to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025: the world is not on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Over the past decade, many initiatives have emerged worldwide to stimulate engagement with the agenda, but multiple crisis, conflicts and geopolitical developments have made the path to achieving the SDGs more difficult. At the same time, a political "SDG fatigue" seems to prevail, resulting in fading focus, lack of financing resulting – in the case of Denmark – in a new National Action Plan discretely presented and proposing little action.

The UN is currently building the fundaments of what might be needed beyond 2030, with initiatives such as the Pact for the Future, the recent Sevilla Commitment, a framework for global financing for development. Both initiatives focus on the need to strengthen cooperation and multilateralism to advance sustainable development. Yet, at this point, it is difficult to imagine the emergence of a global plan of action about the post-2030 future that would be supported universally.

With this in mind, and in the midst of the multi-crisis situation we are living, it is time to learn what has held the world back and to reset priorities. It is time to rethink Agenda 2030.

The presentation will present some visions, reflections and proposals, from the perspective of civil society, under three main headlines:

- The major critiques of the current agenda
- Rethinking concepts, systems and approaches
- Agenda 2040 - lead by Nordic countries?

Table 2: Everyone Can Flourish – Vision, Philosophy and Governance Model

***Micke Larsson**, Co-creator of the Everyone Can Flourish Global Project, Åland Islands, Finland*

'Everyone Can Flourish' is a vision that goes beyond the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It places the idea of a 'Flourishing Age,' in which humans have achieved peace with themselves, each other, and with the rest of nature, at the heart of public policy. Efforts at economic development are explicitly judged by their success in promoting these outcomes.

At its core, this concept is both deeply philosophical and inherently practical. It provides a compass for how individuals, communities, and institutions can navigate themselves—ethically, socially, and practically—in everyday life and long-term decision-making.

is envisioned is a society where every individual has access to the resources and opportunities needed to lead a meaningful life. Rather than focusing on economic growth, the focus is on creating a society where sustainability, environmental stewardship, and justice are central to all development. This would be a world in which flourishing is not a privilege for the few, but a shared possibility for everyone.

This vision is supported by a concrete governance model designed to put it into practice. This model outlines how societies, institutions, and communities can organize their decision-making processes to foster long-term sustainability, social equity, individual flourishing, and ecological balance. It moves beyond traditional governance structures and instead promotes inclusive, participatory, and values-driven leadership.

The concept was developed on the Åland Islands (Finland) over the past ten years. In the global 'Everyone Can Flourish' project, which is being launched 2025-2026, UN-Habitat, Forus International and the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University are collaborating to further refine the 'Everyone Can Flourish' concept. At this exchange space table, participants have the opportunity to engage in critical discussions about the concept. All contributions will be used in the ongoing drafting of a white paper, expected to be released in February/March 2026.

Table 3: Beyond 2030: Youth Visions for Sustainable Security

***Cara Borg Aquilina**, ESDN Youth Network Member, Malta*
&
***Erika Teixeira E Silva**, ESDN Youth Network Member, Belgium*
&
***Sofia Tokošová**, ESDN Youth Network Member, Slovakia*

This session will delve into the central themes of the ESDN Youth Network's Policy Note on Security and Youth Involvement in Policy Making – Post-2030 Agenda. It will provide an overview of how the concept of security is evolving in light of shifting geopolitical dynamics, climate-related risks, and societal pressures, and will outline the paper's framing of security as a multidimensional issue that extends beyond defense to encompass sustainability, human well-being, and institutional resilience.

The discussion will highlight the Policy Note's principal thematic areas, including Europe's role in promoting geopolitical stability, the growing importance of environmental and climate-related security considerations, and the need to strengthen economic, health, and educational resilience within societies. It will also focus on meaningful youth involvement in policymaking processes through structural participation, continuity across mandates, and the integration of youth perspectives into long-term governance.

Overall, the session will offer a synopsis of the Policy Note's key reflections and forward-looking considerations, setting the stage for deeper dialogue on security, sustainability, and youth participation beyond 2030.

Table 4: Advisory Councils on Sustainability – Criteria for Re-Baselining the Post-2030 Agenda

***Wolfgang Lucht**, German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) & Member of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network (EEAC Network), Germany*

&

***Cecilie Friis**, Senior Advisor, CONCITO - Climate Laboratory, Denmark*

The bleak reality of current political strategies for sustainability and environmental integrity is that, despite important progress, they are not satisfactorily delivering on targets set for 2030. Seven of nine planetary boundaries are transgressed, often substantially, putting the natural foundations of our complex societies at considerable risk. Only 8 of 25 environmental indicators of the German Sustainability Strategy are trending toward their 2030 targets (for example). Strategies for the next phase post-2030 cannot therefore consist of a mere next-steps iterations of current approaches. While building on the foundations established, a re-baselining is advised. What would it potentially entail? First, a re-aligning with the foundation of Earth system science and its newest findings. This implies reflecting that the ecological foundations of societies are the basis for societies and economies, rather than just one dimension of a three-dimensional trade-off. This was already accepted as the sustainability paradigms underpinning the SDGs but is not substantially reflected in political strategies. Second, the development of criteria for national policies with a credible planetary stewardship outlook. Policy proposals on a national level might be evaluated and discussed based on such criteria that reflect an awareness of systemic responsibilities. And third, the idea of sustainable development, frequently read as consisting of only a combination of catch-up economic growth and green technologies, must be advanced to larger concepts of inclusive ecological civilization, i.a. founded on common values such as respect for life and others. This implies a political competition for paths forward within the planetary boundaries, resonating with regional histories of ideas and cultures, but transparent in its principles. Such principles, against which national policies for stewardship of the planetary commons could be evaluated, have been explored by Denmark's Concito project on Planetary Politics. These include, with more detailed sub-categories, the four major dimensions of considering: 1) time lags and tipping elements, 2) system feedbacks and complexities, including across the social and ecological dimensions, 3) absolute boundaries, and accumulated pressures, as well as 4) uneven geographies, i.e. matters of responsibility and justice. Combined, a re-baselining of sustainability and environmental integrity strategies on such a foundation could lead to next-phase strategies that more convincingly reflect our state of knowledge and joint stewardship of the planetary commons, irrespective of short-term political pressures.

Table 5: Global challenges are connected to resilient business - The success of the SDGs impact business

***Sara Krüger Falk**, Executive Director of the Global Compact Network Denmark, Denmark*

The public sector alone cannot be entirely responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The private sector also has a role to play in leading the way to a more sustainable future and planet. As consumer expectations seem to favor companies and businesses that adhere to sustainable development

principles. Additionally, European businesses are facing increasing pressure from the EU regarding directives, such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). Businesses are encouraged, however, to not see regulations as a burden, but as a strategy for companies to build resilience and be more future-oriented.

Table 6: Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Development – Swiss National Dialogue 2030

***Fabrice Burri**, ESDN Advisory Board Member and Scientific Collaborator, Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), Switzerland*

The Dialogue 2030 of the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE enables an exchange with relevant national stakeholder groups and thus helps to coordinate an effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Switzerland. This year's edition was dedicated to the topic of "AI and sustainability. Together with the most important national and selected international players in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) they discussed how the implementation of the 2030 Agenda could be accelerated, the biggest challenges addressed, and promising approaches promoted.

AI has considerable potential to promote the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - for example through more efficient use of resources, intelligent mobility solutions or the optimization of the healthcare system. At the same time, technological progress poses new challenges for politics and society: Data protection, algorithmic transparency and ethical responsibility require a clear legal framework and democratic control. Politically, it must be ensured that AI solutions are developed in accordance with human rights and the principle of sustainability. Socially, the digital divide must be reduced and trust in AI strengthened - in particular through education, participation and inclusive innovation. Switzerland is therefore faced with the task of developing a responsible AI strategy that combines economic competitiveness with social justice and environmental sustainability.

The key findings from the conference will be presented at this Exchange Space. There will also be an opportunity to discuss how this issue is being addressed in individual countries. Are there any strategies in place in this area, or are any specific activities being carried out?

Table 7: Sustainable Food Systems and Rural Futures in the Post-2030 Agenda: Ensuring No One and No Place is Left Behind

***Stoyan Tchoukanov**, NAT Section President, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Bulgaria*

As the world looks beyond 2030, ensuring sustainable and fair food systems will be central to achieving long-term global wellbeing. Agriculture and rural areas play a vital role in providing food, maintaining biodiversity, supporting communities, and driving climate resilience. Yet, despite their importance, farmers and rural regions are often underrepresented in global sustainability debates. This exchange space will explore how future global goals can better reflect the realities of food producers and rural territories, and how they can support a fair transition that balances environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

Participants are invited to share their reflections, experiences, and ideas on what should come after the current SDG framework – from strengthening food security and rural resilience to enhancing equity and sustainability in food systems. The session aims to gather diverse perspectives that can inspire future

European and international discussions on shaping an inclusive post-2030 agenda that truly leaves no one and no place behind.

Table 8: The Role of Science in Shaping the Post-2030 Framework

***Therese Bennich**, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Sweden*

As the 2030 Agenda enters its final years, discussions are intensifying about what should follow. This session asks: How can science best support the negotiations and provide the evidence base for a post-2030 framework for sustainable development?

The session will explore four interlinked questions:

- What proposals are currently emerging for the post-2030 Agenda?
- To what extent do these align with lessons from local and national implementation of the SDGs?
- What critical knowledge gaps must be addressed by 2030?
- How can the scientific community more effectively support both implementing and negotiating actors in shaping the next global framework?

Conclusion – What you as participants are most interested in

When registering for the conference, participants were asked: “What questions do you have on the topics being addressed”, and “What are you hoping to learn from this Conference?” The event organizers highly appreciate those who provided feedback and answers. The results can be found below and are clustered based on thematic focus, of which there are ten. We hope you will have fruitful discussions with your fellow participants and the speakers that have been invited to provide some answers and food for thought on many of the points raised below.

1. Reflections on the 2030 Agenda: What worked & what did not

- What has been successful or unsuccessful in SDG implementation across Europe and globally.
- Best practices across countries, municipalities, and sectors.
- Examples of whole-of-society approaches, governance innovations, and cross-border collaboration.
- How to address SDG fatigue and regain momentum in a context of geopolitical uncertainty.

2. Accelerating Action 2025–2030

- How to speed up SDG progress in the final five years.
- Data-driven methods, monitoring, evaluation, and innovative tools.
- Partnerships, policy coherence, and multilevel cooperation to strengthen implementation.
- How Europe can take leadership in the last stretch before 2030.

3. Developing the Post-2030 Agenda – What comes after 2030?

- How to envision a future sustainable development framework (continuity vs. new goals).
- Whether the Agenda should be extended to 2050.
- Which mechanisms, governance models, and processes should remain or be adapted.
- How to prepare for global negotiations (including the 2026 Summit).
- The role of human rights, peace & security, and global solidarity in a future agenda.
- The impact of polycrisis, geopolitics, and multilateral challenges on shaping a post-2030 framework.

4. Roles of Different Levels of Governance

- The positions and expectations of national governments, EU institutions, and global actors.
- The role of local authorities, cities, communities, and regional bodies (e.g., Nordic region, EU-regions).
- How associations of local authorities can be better integrated into post-2030 shaping.
- How Europe can speak with one voice and contribute effectively at the global level.

5. Stakeholder Inclusion & Collaboration

- How to meaningfully involve youth, civil society, private sector, and academia.
- How to improve ESG regulation acceptance, private-sector engagement, and responsible business conduct.
- How to design inclusive processes ensuring that the most involved stakeholders shape the next agenda.
- How to strengthen science–policy interfaces and provide evidence for decision-making.

6. Learning from Good Practices

- Cross-country and cross-sector examples of what works in SDG governance and beyond-2030 thinking.
- Inspiration from Nordic countries, Wales's future generations model, and other innovative frameworks.
- Insights on AI and sustainability, and other emerging themes influencing future agendas.

7. Youth, Future Generations & Intergenerational Equity

- How youth representation has worked so far and how it can be improved.
- The role of young people in shaping post-2030 goals.
- Mechanisms to ensure future-generation considerations are embedded without relying solely on legislation.

8. Narrative, Communication & Political Momentum

- How to create a compelling narrative for extending (not replacing) the SDGs.
- How to counter political short-termism and keep sustainability high on the political agenda.
- How to organize ourselves as Europeans to maintain commitment beyond 2030.

9. Localisation & Community-Level Priorities

- SDG localization and local priorities for the next agenda.
- Community needs, practical levers for action, and effective multilevel cooperation.
- How local examples can influence national and global debates.

10. Fundamental Questions About the Next Agenda

- What should be the key priorities of a future global development agenda?
- How should economic growth be framed post-2030?
- Should SDGs be revised, extended, or moderately adjusted?
- What are the risks if we do not act now, and how can efforts avoid losing momentum after 2030?