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Update 2030 Agenda



Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD)

In the spotlight

- [SD Knowledge Platform](#)
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- [Earth Negotiations Bulletin HLPF 2020](#)
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HLPF 2020

From 7 to 16 July, the [High-Level Political Forum](#) (HLPF) took place. Each year, the HLPF takes stock of the implementation of the [SDGs](#). The 2019 HLPF had shown that the international community was not on course to meet the agreed targets. 2020 was to be the decisive year for a '[Decade of Action](#)'. A review of the functioning of the HLPF would be undertaken and new agreements would be made at the 2020 HLPF.

The global corona crisis thwarted all these good intentions. Many international meetings, such as the major climate and biodiversity conferences, were postponed to 2021. It soon became clear that the global pandemic might further delay the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, whereas in fact an acceleration is needed. In the recovery plans of the different countries, the [SDGs](#) should be able to play a central role "to build back better", through sustainable and equitable recovery policies. It was therefore decided to let the HLPF 2020 continue, albeit in a virtual form.

The [HLPF](#) was eventually followed by many people. There were [47 Voluntary National Reviews](#) (VNR) proposed. There was a lot of attention for the consequences of Covid-19 for sustainable development. Secretary-General Guterres explicitly called for a sustainable recovery policy that would

not further increase inequality within and between countries. However, there was no agreement on a [ministerial declaration](#). The [HLPF](#) produced [few concrete results](#). In the meantime, work is continuing on [reviewing](#) the operation of the HLPF and at the [2021 edition](#), sustainable economic recovery will be the central theme. (Photo: IISD)



Young people draw attention to unemployment

Together with young people from other countries, the Belgian youth representatives organised a [side-event](#) during HLPF 2020. They discussed the consequences of the corona crisis for the future prospects of young people. In many countries, youth unemployment has risen again since the crisis.

Several experts spoke at the event. They made [recommendations](#) such as promoting digital skills, adapting legislation to the precarious work situations of young people and providing social protection that also takes into account the mental health of young people.

The new federal government and the SDGs

In the autumn of 2020, a new federal government could take office. Will this government opt for an ambitious sustainable development policy? In the [coalition agreement](#) and the [policy notes 2021](#), we can already find the plans of this government.

The government says it wants to continue working on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This should be done by paying attention to the principle of policy coherence in external policy. The SDGs should become a compass for the policy in the country itself, even more so than now. To this end, a [study](#) on a sustainable recovery policy, which was presented during the recent

[SDG Forum](#), will be further developed. In the spring of 2021, there should be a study to formulate the SDGs more 'SMART'.



Belgium plans to submit another [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#) to the [HLPF](#) in 2022 or 2023. In 2017, our country already presented a first VNR. ([Advice FRDO -CFDD](#))

Another important point is that - after years of delay - there will finally be a new federal sustainable development plan. This should be an implementation strategy for the SDGs. The FRDO-CFDD will play an important role in the preparation of that plan. Work will also be done on a Belgian SDG charter for companies and organisations.

“Despite the ambitions of the SDGs, whole regions of the world risk being left behind in terms of data.”

(Tom Moultrie and Vissého Adjiwanou)

Flash

An article about [smart cities and SDGs](#). • A [report](#) by EEB and European Youth Forum with a vision on jobs in a post-pandemic Europe. • A report on a [cohesion policy](#) focused on the SDGs. • An overview of important [UN events](#) in 2021 related to the SDGs. • A [study by the JRC](#) on the link between the SDGs and economic recovery policies. • The [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](#). • For the 2021 version of the [EU SDG Monitoring Report](#), there will be some changes in, among others, the choice of indi-

cators. • CONCORD on a different [trade policy](#) for the EU. • How can a more efficient use of raw materials reduce climate change? A [new report](#) by the International Resource Panel. • What can [solar energy](#) mean for the SDGs? • Developing countries have too few financial resources to finance the SDGs. So says the OECD in a [report](#). • A briefing paper on the [SDGs and the European regions](#).

Europe Sustainable Development Report 2020

In December, [SDSN](#) and [IEEP](#) published the second [Europe Sustainable Development Report](#). By means of an SDG Index, among other things, the report shows how the EU and the Member States score in the implementation of the SDGs. The biggest [challenges](#) for the EU lie in the areas of nutrition, climate, biodiversity and inequality. It is also true that the organisation of value chains causes many [negative effects](#) outside the EU. The report calls for a sustainable recovery policy in response to Covid-19

and suggests that the SDGs should be the framework for this.



How is the EU working towards the SDGs?

On 18 November, the Commission presented the '[autumn package](#)' of the European Semester. Part of that presentation was an explanation of how the EU will implement [the SDGs](#) in the coming years. In recent years, there has been a lot of discussion about this implementation. During the previous Commission's term of office, a special '[Multi-stakeholder Platform on SDGs](#)' formulated a series of recommendations for a better strategic framework for the implementation of the SDGs. The Member States were asking for a detailed implementation strategy for the SDGs. The Commission did not want to answer that question.

The von der Leyen Commission

has now provided more clarity. In a special '[Staff Working Document](#)', the Commission opts for a '[holistic approach](#)'. This means that the SDGs will be integrated into all current policy initiatives, such as the [European Green Deal](#). Policy coherence between the different policy areas will be worked on. Commission President von der Leyen will be politically responsible for coordination.

Organisations like [WWF](#) or [SDG Watch](#) are pleased that there is finally more clarity. They are happy that the President of the Commission will have political responsibility for the SDGs. At the same time, they are disappointed that there will be no full-fledged implementation strategy and that

there will be little structural consultation with civil society. There is also disappointment that the Commission document does not announce any new actions but only repeats what is already happening.



Flash

A briefing paper on the role of [finance and technology](#) in achieving the SDGs. • The UN produced new [guidelines](#) for countries wishing to propose a VNR to the HLPF. • A report by CONCORD on [sustainable and inclusive business models](#) in EU external policies. • An [update](#) on the recommendations to integrate the SDGs into the GRI guidelines for sustainability reports. • An ODI report on the principle of '[Leave no one behind](#)' in the 2030 Agenda. • How can [blockchain](#) help achieve the SDGs for higher edu-

cation? • [UN Global Compact](#) has a new strategy. • An article on [intercultural education](#) and sustainable development. • An ILO report on a [social and inclusive economy](#). • The [Human Development Report 2020](#). • A new report by Oxfam states that [inequality](#) has increased because of Covid-19. • The secretariat of the FRDO-CFDD issues a weekly briefing on the [European Green Deal](#).

“However, perhaps more worryingly, one fifth of the investors we spoke to were unaware of the SDGs altogether.”

([Simon Cooper](#))

More resources needed for climate adaptation in the South

UNEP recently published the [UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2020](#). The consequences of climate change are becoming increasingly clear all over the world. It is therefore important that countries develop good adaptation policies to arm themselves against these consequences. The report shows that three quarters of the countries now have adaptation policies. But there are not enough resources and there are also major problems in implementing the policies. Many countries in the South, which are already harder hit by climate

change, will find it even harder. The annual cost of adaptation in developing countries is estimated at USD 70 billion. That amount is likely to rise to 140-300 billion in 2030 and 280-500 billion in 2050. More attention is needed for nature-based solutions.





FRDO CFDD

**Federal Council for Sustainable
Development**

*This newsletter is produced under the responsibility of the administrative office of the **Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO/CFDD)**. The FRDO/CFDD advises the Belgian government on the federal policy on sustainable development. The council moreover organises activities to enhance the base for sustainable development.*

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Are the SDGs in danger because of Covid-19?

In recent years, it appeared that the international community was not yet on the right track to fully realise the SDGs by 2030. The global corona crisis has made that challenge even more difficult. There is a high risk of further delays in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, there is also a great opportunity to use the various economic recovery plans as a lever to make the SDGs a true compass for sustainable development.

The European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) made [an extensive paper](#) about this. ETTG investigates whether the EU is ready for the challenge. The choices made in the coming months and years will be decisive. The von der Leyen Commission has committed itself to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but does not have a detailed implementation strategy.

The European Green Deal is central to EU policy and could in principle become an important driver for the SDGs. The researchers are of the opinion that the social dimension of the Green Deal has not yet been sufficiently elaborated.

The crucial question is which political choices will now be made in response to Covid-19. Will there be sufficient financial resources for a sustainable recovery policy? Will there be a real change in, among others, the Common Agricultural Policy, which will make the achievement of the SDGs possible again? Will the SDGs be given a more structural place in the EU's external policy?

The researchers formulate a series of recommendations that could ensure that attention for the SDGs is anchored more structurally in EU policy. For example, for those areas where the implementation of the SDGs lags behind, additional objectives or strategies would be necessary.

