DRAFT REPORT

on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2022/2002(INI))

Committee on Development
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Rapporteurs: Barry Andrews, Petros Kokkalis

(Joint committee procedure - Rule 58 of the Rules of Procedure)
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2022/2002(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the UN resolution entitled ‘Transforming our World – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015 in New York (the 2030 Agenda),

– having regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),

– having regard to the Agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),

– having regard to the submission on 6 March 2015 by Latvia and the Commission on behalf of the EU and its Member States to the UNFCCC of the intended nationally determined contribution of the EU and its Member States,

– having regard to the submission on 17 December 2020 by Germany and the Commission on behalf of the EU and its Member States to the UNFCCC of the update of the nationally determined contribution of the EU and its Member States,

– having regard to the joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, Parliament and the Commission of 30 June 2017 on the New European Consensus on Development – ‘Our world, our dignity, our future’¹,


– having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2019 on the Annual strategic report on the implementation and delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³,

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 June 2017 on the EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

– having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2017 on EU action for sustainability⁴,

having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),

having regard to the Commission report of May 15 2019 on the evaluation of the 7th Environment Action Programme (COM(2019)0233),

having regard to the Commission proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 (COM(2020)0652),

having regard to the European Environment Agency report of 2019 entitled ‘The European environment – state and outlook 2020: Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe’,

having regard to Eurostat’s 2021 monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context,

having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2021 on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 20215,

having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 19 September 2018 entitled ‘Indicators better suited to evaluate the SDGs – the civil society contribution’6,

having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 June 2021 on a comprehensive approach to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development – Building back better from the COVID-19 crisis,


having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Development and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety under Rule 58 of the Rules of Procedure,

having regard to the letter from the Committee on Culture and Education,

having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A9-0000/2022),

A. whereas there will be no climate justice without environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development; whereas achieving the SDGs is therefore an essential prerequisite to achieving a just transition under the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal;

5 OJ C 474, 24.11.2021, p. 91.
B. whereas the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet fully known, but has already led to a significant degree of SDG backsliding;

Introduction

1. Reaffirms its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs; stresses that, in the light of the pandemic, the SDGs provide a unique pathway to both ensure a recovery that would leave no one behind and build back better a more equitable and resilient world;

Governance

2. Welcomes the commitment by the President of the Commission to pursue a ‘whole-of-government’ approach towards the EU’s SDG implementation and to mainstream the SDGs across each Commissioner’s portfolio; asserts, however, that such an approach can only be effective with leadership at the highest level;

3. Reiterates that to achieve the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda requires a strong level of societal legitimacy and a genuine political reset; emphasises the immense value of civil society organisations in this regard; deeply regrets that the mandate of the multi-stakeholder platform was not renewed in 2019 and calls for its urgent reinstatement;

4. Regrets the fact that efforts to mainstream the SDGs across EU policies have not matured beyond a mapping exercise; recalls that many EU internal policies not only contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, but also have a very high ecological, social and economic spillover impact on developing countries;

5. Is highly concerned that the key provisions of policy coherence for development are acutely lacking in the landmark ‘Fit for 55’ legislative package and the Commission’s work in general;

6. Calls for the Commission to adopt a new, high-level EU SDG implementation strategy given that there are only eight years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda and, hence, urgent implementation is required;

7. Is of the view that the adoption of the new comprehensive implementation strategy should be preceded by a broad public participatory consultation process;

Monitoring

8. Asserts that identifying the EU’s added value in SDG implementation can only be achieved through filling existing data gaps to better understand the EU’s true impact on SDG progress in the EU and globally;

9. Calls for an annual review of the Eurostat SDG indicator set with the systematic participation of civil society organisations, in line with the 2021 review; emphasises that sustainable development is inherently trans-national; welcomes the work that Eurostat

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\(^7\) COM(2021)0550.
has initiated to this end and the first attempt to partially quantify such spillover effects, but stresses that this methodology needs to be further developed to sufficiently account for the EU’s global footprint;  

10. Stresses that a minimum level of data and statistical disaggregation in relation to the SDGs in the EU should be established, covering, where appropriate, geographic location, sex, income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and other characteristics;  

11. Recalls that voluntary national reviews are the key accountability tool in the 2030 Agenda; calls for the EU to present an annual EU voluntary review at each High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF);  

12. Recognises the importance of voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews for the implementation of the SDGs; calls on the Commission to present an inclusive EU voluntary regional review ahead of the 2023 SDG Summit, and every four years thereafter;  

13. Calls on the Commission to take stock of the progress made and of the findings of the Eurostat annual SDGs monitoring report during Parliament’s plenary session every September, alongside the State of the Union, thus initiating a ‘State of the Union SDGs’;  

Budget and financing  

14. Underlines that the EU budget is a pivotal tool for implementing the SDGs, due to its size of EUR 1.8 trillion, long-term reach and multinational dimension;  

15. Welcomes the Commission’s efforts to track EU budget expenditure on climate, biodiversity, clean air, migration and gender equality; regrets, however, that no progress has been made to track SGDs-related expenditure in its entirety;  

16. Welcomes efforts made to integrate the SDGs into the European Semester;  

17. Requests comprehensive mapping of the financial envelopes of EU policies, programmes and funds, including of the investments and structural reforms pursued under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in order to ensure alignment with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda;  

18. Underlines that public and private financing must be aligned with the SDGs; urges the Commission to embed the 2030 Agenda in economic and financial policies and legislation;

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10 Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, for the Committee on Budgetary Control, "Budgetary control of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU budget – What measures are in place to ensure effective implementation?", 2021.
19. Highlights the urgency of requiring financial institutions to define and adopt strategies and targets to align financial portfolios with the SDGs and regularly report on progress;

20. Regrets that the EU still has no plan to finance the SDGs; exhorts the Commission to urgently come up with such a plan, bearing in mind the post-COVID-19 estimated annual SDG financing gap of EUR 4.2 trillion\(^{11}\); underlines that the absence of such a plan, with clearly defined, quantifiable targets, prohibits comprehensive SDG expenditure tracking under the EU budget;

21. Welcomes ongoing efforts to enhance the European financial architecture for development, as outlined in the Council conclusions of 14 June 2021;

*Multilateral cooperation*

22. Insists that a global political reset and intensified multilateral cooperation will be necessary in order for the EU and its partners to make meaningful progress in the coming eight years; recalls that, as the world’s most successful integration project with a track record of successfully championing multilateralism, the EU is uniquely placed to accelerate progress on SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals); calls, therefore, on the EU to assume a leadership role at the 2022 HLPF and the 2023 SDG Summit in defining this political reset;

23. Stresses the fact that Europe faces its greatest SDG challenges in the areas of sustainable diets and agriculture, climate and biodiversity (SDGs 2, 12, 13, 14 and 15); calls on the Commission to develop a robust comparative analysis of SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 14 (life below water), as trends cannot be calculated due to insufficient comparable data over the past five years;

24. Calls on the EU to present its first official EU voluntary review and voluntary regional review at the 2023 SDG Summit and lay the groundwork for this by presenting an initial review of the five priority SDGs at the upcoming 2022 HLPF, namely, SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships for the goals);

25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With just 8 years left to meet the targets outlined under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is pertinent that the EU immediately steps up its global efforts to meet all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that the 17 goals and 169 targets are integrated and indivisible, and that they balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, providing a holistic vision for the wellbeing of people and the planet, placing equality and resilience at the core. They provide the only universally agreed and universally applicable framework for global evidence-based policy-making in this crucial decade. The interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are of crucial importance to the realisation of Agenda 2030. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, they provide a unique pathway to recovery and to ‘building back better’, that is, constructing a more equitable and resilient world that prospers within planetary boundaries, while leaving no one behind.

To that end, this report focuses on the tools currently at the EU’s disposal to help globally implement the SDGs. Rather than honing in on specific SDG targets and progress made to date, this report identifies the remaining gaps and challenges and addresses various opportunities which would assist the EU in its global efforts to meet all 17 SDGs by 2030. The report should also be seen as an EU effort to sum up its progress before attending the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2022. The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and global review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. This year’s HLPF will focus on how to build back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of Agenda 2030.

Long-term planning for obtaining the SDGs is no longer sufficient, urgent action is now necessary. This report seeks to demonstrate how, despite a significant effort to map the EU’s progress on the SDGs, the EU has thus far failed to fulfil its role as leader in the global effort to achieve the 17 SDGs. Better implementation is therefore needed, which will require more coherent financing and, above all, stronger leadership both within the EU and on the global stage.

As is demonstrated by the landmark European Green Deal, sustainable development is at the core of the EU’s identity. The EU was a leader in the revision of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the negotiation of Agenda 2030. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union commits the EU to the sustainable development of Europe, whereas Article 21 explicitly states that the EU shall promote sustainable development beyond its borders, including in developing countries. The EU is obliged to incorporate the objectives of development cooperation into any internal or external policies that are likely to affect developing countries, as set out in Article 208 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. Policy coherence for development (PCD) constitutes a key pillar of the EU’s efforts to increase the effectiveness of development cooperation. This concept of policy coherence in support of development objectives was introduced in EU fundamental law in 1992 with the Treaty of Maastricht and was further reinforced in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 and, subsequently, in the 2017 'European Consensus on Sustainable Development'. In 2019, European Commission President von der Leyen committed to a ‘whole of government’
approach to the SDGs. As a result, efforts have been made to mainstream the SDGs across each Commissioner’s portfolio, to ensure that trade agreements promote sustainable development, to embed binding SDG targets within the NDICI-Global Europe instrument and to integrate the SDGs into the European Semester.

This report seeks to highlight, nonetheless, that EU’s strategy on SDG implementation contains serious deficiencies, namely in terms of governance, which has had a detrimental impact on EU efforts to garner political interest, secure progress and gain societal legitimacy. As such, a core demand of report is that the EU adopts a single, high-level strategy for the EU’s implementation of the SDGs until 2030. This should reform the governance of the SDGs, tackling issues such as leadership, targets, monitoring and financing.

The EU’s inability to adopt such a strategy has resulted in significant ecological, social and economic spillovers on a global scale. Although high-income countries – including all EU Member States – have made most progress on the SDGs, they also generate the greatest spillovers worldwide, which may undermine the ability of developing and least developed countries to achieve their targets. Further understanding is therefore needed of the transboundary nature of sustainable development. To this end, the work of Eurostat to quantify spillover effects in the 2021 edition of its SDG monitoring report must be continued. It is fundamental that the methodology used is further developed in order to sufficiently identify the EU’s true global footprint and to take corrective measures.

Climate change is an example of a transboundary phenomenon that is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing communities and states dearly today and even more tomorrow. This report aims to acknowledge the close interlinkages between climate change and sustainable development. Indeed, climate change can undermine progress towards sustainable development. Conversely, science- and evidence-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures can have a positive and long-lasting contribution to poverty alleviation, food security, healthy ecosystems, equality and justice. Some SDGs have a strong environmental dimension such as SDG 13 on climate action (which aims to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact”), SDG 14 on conservation of marine ecosystems, and SDG 15 on the conservation of terrestrial ecosystems and the sustainable use of their resources. Nevertheless, all Goals are deemed to have a strong connection - direct or indirect - to climate action.

The European Green Deal aims to transform the EU into a fair, inclusive and prosperous society, with a resource-efficient, circular economy, with no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050. In the light of the recent pandemic and its severe effects on health and the wellbeing of citizens, the value of the European Green Deal has become even more evident. In committing to climate-neutrality, and while designing and adopting the transformative and crosscutting measures required to achieve it, the EU has pledged to place people first and make the transition just and inclusive. In this regard, the climate and environmental objectives defined in the European Green Deal are part of the Union’s strategy to deliver the SDGs, and vice versa. The link between the European Green Deal and the SDGs was recently recognised in the 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP), which “forms the basis for achieving the environment and climate-related objectives defined under the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs’”. Ahead of the 27th United Nations Climate Change conference (COP27), the European SDG Summit on 10-12 October 2022 will convene sustainability leaders worldwide to address one pressing question: how can we build together a green and inclusive Europe? As such, more effective implementation of the SDGs is an essential prerequisite of the attainment
of the EU’s climate objectives.

The issue of accountability must also be addressed. Voluntary National Reviews are the pivotal accountability mechanism of Agenda 2030. However, a significant degree of policymaking now takes place at EU-level, which warrants the presentation of an EU specific Voluntary Review (EUVR). This will ensure that EU institutions fulfil their commitments of implementing a clear strategy and meet the required targets. More effort should also be invested in local and regional monitoring. Democratic scrutiny and civic participation in the EU's SDG implementation must be further reinforced.

Finally, there can be no implementation without adequate financing. The OECD’s *Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021* estimates that COVID-19 has caused an overall decline in resources of USD 700 billion, and an increase in needs of USD 1 trillion (the so-called scissor effect) so that the SDG annual funding gap in developing countries of USD 2.5 trillion before the pandemic could increase by 70% post-COVID-19 to USD 4.2 trillion (EUR 3.7 trillion).

Yet there is no single plan to finance the SDGs – neither at global nor at EU level. The report aims, therefore, to highlight the importance of the EU budget, which plays an important role in the implementation of SDGs. However, it also recognises that the public money will not be enough. Resource mobilisation, including from private stakeholders, and the revision of the European Architecture for Development will be key, as will a better, more structured framework to track SDG expenditure.

The greatest challenges of our time - climate change, pandemics, conflict, mass displacement, extreme poverty - are all highly complex and require holistic, global responses: Agenda 2030 is the only framework that enables such a response. It is time that the SDGs are taken seriously. To live up to its name and tackle the issues that affect the lives of European citizens and our partners around the world, it is a matter of political urgency that the EU dramatically scales up its efforts towards Agenda 2030, internally and on the global stage.