



## PRESS RELEASE

# Major transformations needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU by 2030, shows new report by SDSN and IEEP

*Brussels, 19 November 2019* – The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) publish today the first independent quantitative report on the progress of the European Union and its member states towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by all UN member states in 2015.

As the new European Commission prepares the European Green Deal, the 2019 Europe Sustainable Development Report comes at a crucial time, shedding light on the key economic, social and environmental sustainability challenges faced by the member states and the European Union as a whole in their progress towards SDGs.

The report finds that:

1. While European countries lead globally on the SDGs, none are on track to achieve the Goals by 2030.
2. Countries closest to achieving the SDGs include Denmark, Sweden and Finland, whereas Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus rank last among 28 countries assessed.
3. The EU and its member states face the greatest challenges on goals related to climate, biodiversity, and circular economy, as well as achieving the convergence in living standards, both within each country as well as across countries and regions.
4. The EU generates large, negative spillovers that impede other countries' ability to achieve the SDGs. The largest negative impacts are caused by unsustainable demand for agricultural, forest, and fishery products.

The report outlines six transformations that together can achieve all 17 SDGs and applies them to the European Union. It offers practical recommendations for how the EU and its member states can achieve the SDGs with a focus on three broad areas: **internal priorities, diplomacy and development cooperation, and tackling negative international spillovers.**

The good news is that the necessary instruments already exist to achieve the SDGs throughout the EU. The new Commission should therefore focus on aligning existing instruments and mechanisms (including budget, investment strategies, regulatory governance, monitoring frameworks) with the SDGs.

## Key recommendations include:

1. The European Green Deal can be the cornerstone for implementing the SDGs in the EU. It must include an EU-wide strategy to (i) fully decarbonise the energy system by 2050; (ii) strengthen the circular economy and achieve greater efficiencies in resource use and far lower waste; and (iii) promote sustainable land-use and food systems by 2050.
2. The EU needs to increase public and private investments in sustainable infrastructure, including power and transport. This in turn will require greater financial resources for the EU.
3. Europe needs to increase investments in education, job skills, and innovation, with a focus on STEM education at all levels and R&D for sustainable technologies.
4. The EU needs to put SDGs at the centre of its diplomacy and development cooperation.
5. The EU needs to strengthen policy coherence and address negative international spillovers that undermine other countries' ability to achieve the SDGs.

**Céline Charveriat**, IEEP Executive Director: *“The report shows Europe is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a wake-up call for the continent’s policymakers. The EU urgently needs a science-based Green Deal that addresses climate change, pollution, biodiversity and overconsumption. By creating a new, inclusive low-carbon circular industry and agriculture, Europe can show the world that it is possible to preserve economic prosperity, while at the same time reducing inequalities and protecting the natural resources that we all depend on for our health and nutrition*  
”

Guido Schmidt-Traub, SDSN Executive Director: *“With the SDGs, the world has adopted Europe’s agenda of a social market economy. It is therefore critical that the EU lead internally and internationally on implementing the SDGs. The new Commission has announced bold action on the SDGs. Our report outlines how this ambition can be turned into reality using existing tools and better coordination of member states’ policies across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The European Green Deal, a European Semester aligned with the SDGs, and bold diplomacy with effective development cooperation will be the lynchpins of such a strategy.”*

**Link to report** (Live 19 November 00:01 CET)

[www.sdgindex.org/EU](http://www.sdgindex.org/EU)

**Link to press release** (Live 19 November 00:01 CET)

SDSN: <https://tinyurl.com/ufrijw6>

IEEP: <https://ieep.eu/publications/2019-europe-sustainable-development-report>

**Link to Executive Summary Webpage:**

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/jrADXlKZmr6U2/>

## **SDG Index and Dashboards: the methodology**

The 2019 Europe Sustainable Development Report details progress by EU and its member states on their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on a methodology that measures distance to target, the report estimates how fast each country – and the European Union as a whole – have been progressing towards each of the Goals and determines whether the current pace of progress will be sufficient to achieve them by 2030. In so doing, the European Sustainable Development Report complements the EU's official Eurostat report by being able to show how far each country is from achieving SDGs. The report builds on the methodology developed by the SDSN and Bertelsmann Stiftung to track countries' performance on the SDGs since 2016.

The findings of this independent report are consistent with major related publications:

1. The **2019 Eurostat report**, which concludes that Europe was falling behind in terms of climate action and industry, innovation and infrastructure, while progress was moderate or mixed on responsible consumption and production, life on land, reduced inequalities, affordable and clean energy, zero hunger and gender equality.
2. The **2019 GDSR report** of the United Nations, which warns against negative long-term trends for targets, including inequality in income, absolute material footprint and DMC, global GHG emissions compared with Paris targets, continued deterioration of coastal waters, overfishing, biodiversity loss, wildlife poaching and trafficking and for which progress is too slow for SDGs to be met globally (e.g. social protection for all, ending malnutrition, maintaining genetic diversity, investment in agriculture).
3. The **2018 EEA monitoring report** on the 7th European Environmental Action Plan (EAP), which concludes that 23 out of 30 targets of the 7th EAP were unlikely to be achieved by 2020, including the reduction of food sector's environmental impact and halting of biodiversity loss.

### **About SDSN**

The [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#) (SDSN) operates under the auspices of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to mobilise scientific and technical expertise from academia, civil society, and the private sector to support the implementation of the SDGs and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. SDSN operates national and regional networks of knowledge institutions, solution-focused thematic networks, and the SDG Academy, an online university for sustainable development.

### **About IEEP**

The [Institute for European Environmental Policy](#) (IEEP) is a sustainability think with main offices in Brussels. Working with stakeholders across EU institutions, international bodies, academia, civil society and industry, our team of policy professionals composed of economists, scientists and lawyers produce evidence-based research and policy insight. Our work spans nine research areas and covers both short-term policy issues and long-term strategic studies. As a not-for-profit organisation with over 40-years of experience, we are committed to advancing impact-driven sustainability policy across the EU and the world.

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