



Council of the
European Union

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
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To: Delegations

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Subject: Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030
- Council conclusions (9 April 2019)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions "Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030", as adopted by the Council at its 3685th meeting held on 9 April 2019.

Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030**Council conclusions****The European Union: at the forefront of sustainable development**

1. The Council stresses that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals is essential to our world for ensuring a peaceful and secure life for the current and next generations while respecting the limits of our planet, by upholding democracy, human rights and gender equality, protecting the climate and the environment, building modern, dynamic, and inclusive economies, improving living standards, and narrowing inequalities, so that no one is left behind.
2. The Council underlines that sustainable development lies at the core of the European Union, as set out in the Treaties, and that the principles of the 2030 Agenda are embedded in the principles and values upon which the Union is founded. Therefore, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is paramount to both the values of the European Union and the future of Europe, with the goal of bringing about an ever more sustainable Union.
3. The Council emphasises that it is in the EU's interest to continue to play a leading role in implementing the 2030 Agenda in a coherent, comprehensive, and effective manner, and to drive forward its implementation as a plan of action for People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. In this respect, the Council recalls its commitment to create and maximise synergies between the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainable development, by taking into account the interlinkages between the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Council underlines the urgent need for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda both globally and internally, as an overarching priority of the EU, for the benefit of its citizens and for upholding its credibility within Europe and globally.
5. The Council acknowledges that key EU and global processes and documents, such as the new European Consensus for Development, the EU Global Strategy, the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda are very much interlinked with the EU's sustainable development implementation challenge, and underlines that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU requires that all these processes move in the same direction in a coherent manner.
6. Therefore, the Council welcomes the European Commission's Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" as an urgently needed contribution to the debate on a more sustainable future of Europe and the strategic priority setting for the next European Commission. It welcomes the Commission's analysis of Europe's key sustainable development challenges, as well as its call for the EU to build upon its accomplishments and become a "trailblazer" for sustainable development at the global level, in partnership with the United Nations, through reaffirmed and enhanced multilateralism, and shared values.

Taking action now

7. The Council stresses that, four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is a strong and urgent need to shift to a comprehensive, overarching and ambitious approach at EU level, which builds upon elements of the scenarios presented in the Commission's Reflection Paper, in order to swiftly, thoroughly and vigorously achieve the SDGs by 2030. This approach should guide our present and future actions at EU level, in particular during the next legislative term, which will be crucial for delivering on the SDGs.

8. The Council strongly reiterates its conclusions of June 2017¹ urging the Commission to elaborate a comprehensive implementation strategy outlining timelines, objectives and concrete measures to reflect the 2030 Agenda and mainstream the SDGs in all relevant EU internal and external policies, based on what more needs to be done until 2030, in terms of EU policy, legislation, governance structures for horizontal coherence and means of implementation, as well as the European Council conclusions of October 2018² calling for such a comprehensive strategy to be presented in 2019.
9. While respecting the principle of subsidiarity, proportionality and the division of competences between the EU and the Member States, the Council stresses that the comprehensive EU implementation strategy should be ambitious, evidence-based and risk-informed, encompassing objectives and tangible actions while defining the implementation structures and processes which will support SDG mainstreaming at the EU level and enhance horizontal policy coherence in EU decision making.
10. The Council urges the Commission, in elaborating this comprehensive EU implementation strategy, to present a clear roadmap for addressing the challenges and opportunities outlined in the Commission's Reflection Paper, possibly also in the form of action plans and sectoral strategies, prepared where appropriate by high-level expert groups.
11. The Council considers that the comprehensive EU implementation strategy should use existing mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, so as to avoid duplication and excessive administrative burdens. The Council underlines the importance of a robust, inclusive, transparent, and integrated follow-up and review of the implementation at EU level, based on Eurostat's progress analysis, which will continue to be developed and improved, when appropriate.

¹ 10370/17

² EUCO 13/18

12. The Council stresses the strong and urgent need to enhance Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) at all levels and between all internal and external actions, by accelerating the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in all relevant EU policies, strategies and tools, and to more efficiently use existing mechanisms and instruments, including where relevant the European Semester, the Better Regulation agenda, impact assessment procedures, Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and to assess how the new Multiannual-Financial Framework (MFF) can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
13. In that respect, the Council welcomes the 2019 EU Report on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and its close link with the Reflection Paper. PCD seeks to enhance the positive impact of EU policies in developing countries, by promoting synergies and reducing trade-offs between policies. As underlined in the new European Consensus on Development, this represents an important means for achieving the SDGs and a substantial contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).
14. The Council urges that the main policy foundations for a sustainable future include a decisive transition towards a circular economy, including non-toxic material cycles, striving for climate neutrality, in line with Paris Agreement, protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, tackling climate change, the sustainability of the agriculture and food systems, as well as safe and sustainable low carbon energy, buildings and mobility sectors, while fostering European cohesion. The Council also urges that the social dimension be strengthened in order to promote inclusion, equality, including gender equality, and a socially fair transition, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, while ensuring that EU's common values, including democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights are safeguarded.

15. The Council recognises that the EU's competitive edge depends on the resilience and health of its citizens and, as such, on ensuring the sustainability guided European framework for education, science, technology, research, innovation, digitalisation, culture and sport which are the prerequisites and enablers for achieving an ever more sustainable EU economy, and its integration into global sustainable value chains, to meet the SDGs. In this spirit, the Council stresses the importance of awareness raising through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as key enablers of all other SDGs and as drivers for innovation, resilience and transformative action.
16. The Council reiterates the importance of making finance flows consistent and supportive of the 2030 Agenda including ensuring complementarity and coherence of financial instruments. In this regard, the Council welcomes and supports the Commission's efforts to implement the Action Plan on Financing Sustainable Growth and deepen international cooperation on sustainable finance.
17. The Council emphasises the need to consider the main policy foundations for a sustainable future of Europe as well as the principles of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs in the discussions on the next EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024.

Supporting the SDGs across the world

18. The Council reaffirms the need to continue supporting sustainable development globally and the importance for the EU to present itself on the UN stage as a leading actor for the 2030 Agenda and a firm supporter of the multilateral approach to tackling global challenges.
19. The Council highlights the positive contribution of open and rules-based trade to achieving the SDGs, both in bilateral agreements with third countries and in multilateral settings, including through setting out sustainability objectives in trade policy instruments, and their effective implementation, with a view to achieving appropriate level playing-field conditions.

20. The Council stresses that the EU must continue to advocate and promote the principles of peace, human rights, justice, and the rule of law through effective, transparent and inclusive institutions and good governance as preconditions for sustainable development, and should continue its active engagement with partner countries through policy dialogues and development programmes based on the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.
21. The Council affirms the importance of the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at Heads of State or Government level in September 2019, and looks forward to a concise, comprehensive and powerful political declaration that renews and strengthens the commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, which are integrated, interlinked and indivisible, and set the scene for the next four-year cycle.
22. The Council also looks forward to the European Union's reporting at the HLPF in 2019, both on the internal and external dimensions of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, based on the Commission's Reflection Paper and its annexes, the 2019 Eurostat report, the Joint Synthesis Report and the 2019 EU report on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), expecting the reporting to be prepared in a transparent manner and consistent with Member States' Voluntary National Reviews (VNR).
23. The Council calls on the Member States to continue and accelerate their efforts towards the effective and successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs as well as of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as its integral part, and to share their experiences at the global level by reporting on progress at the annual sessions of the HLPF, including through VNRs.

Strengthening partnerships and stakeholder participation

24. The Council recalls that implementing the 2030 Agenda represents a shared responsibility and requires the continuous and strong involvement of all stakeholders in a well-organised and transparent participatory process to enhance collaboration among them and to facilitate partnership involving the EU and its Member States, local and regional authorities, civil society, the private sector, academia, NGOs, social partners, citizens and other stakeholders, including through targeted communication and by using digital collaboration tools.

25. The Council calls for the strengthening of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the SDGs, which will have an important role in the preparation process as well as in implementing and monitoring the EU implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda, and calls for membership in the Multi-Stakeholder Platform to be inclusive and representative and ensure the involvement of Member States. The Council stresses the need to continue to build on the expertise of peer learning platforms such as the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN).
 26. The Council highlights the important role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs and encourages its continued constructive involvement, through market-based partnerships, investments and business models in line with Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles. These principles, which are based on other instruments such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises or the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, should underpin a robust EU policy framework, including an EU action plan on RBC. The latter should promote responsible management of global supply chains in order to shape an international level playing field.
 27. The Council, recalling the 11 EU Youth goals, recognises, in particular, the importance of the youth dimension in the 2030 Agenda and the key role that young people can play in achieving the SDGs and invites the Member States to consider the needs and expectations of young people in their contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda for all relevant policy sectors and to enable young Europeans to contribute as appropriate to achieving an ever more sustainable Union.
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