



## *Ahead of the June European Election, a new SDSN Report Details Priority Actions to Lay the Foundation for a New European Deal for the Future*

PARIS, FRANCE, 25 January 2024 – The Europe Sustainable Development Report 2023/24 (ESDR), a new report released today produced by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) in collaboration with SDSN Europe and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), reveals that decisive actions must be taken in the European Union (EU) to avoid environmental and social “tipping points” and to maintain the promise of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement.

The fifth edition of the ESDR, which includes the SDG Index and Dashboards, tracks progress on the SDGs of the EU, its Member States, and partner countries in Europe. The report highlights that at the current rate, **a third of the SDG targets will not be achieved by the EU by 2030**, with significant differences across European countries; these range from a quarter in Northern and Western Europe to around half in Southern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe *on average*. In particular, the report underlines stagnation and reversal in progress in many European countries on social targets with growing issues around access to and quality of services for all, as well as poverty and material deprivation driven at least partly by multiple crises since 2020. Globally, the international financial architecture is failing to channel global savings to SDG investments at the needed pace and scale which leads to a reversal in SDG progress in many parts of the world, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

This year’s report provides essential contributions for the EU to strengthen its SDG leadership at home and internationally ahead of the June 2024 European elections and the Summit of the Future convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2024.

**Guillaume Lafortune**, Vice President of the SDSN and a lead author of the report, emphasizes:

*“Political parties campaigning for the European elections and the future leaders of the European Union have historic responsibilities. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 are not being achieved in Europe and globally, yet they remain the future Europe and the world want. Decisive actions must be taken during this decade. This is not the time to backtrack or water down what has been achieved and agreed on to support the implementation of the SDGs and Paris Climate Agreement. Long-term investments and regional cooperation are required to boost skills and innovation and provide equal opportunities for all. In a multipolar and fragmented world, coalitions of European thought leaders must work together to lay the foundations for a new European Deal for the Future and play a leadership role internationally to prepare for the next decades of global sustainable development.”*



**Adolf Kloke-Lesch**, Co-Chair of SDSN Europe and another lead author of the report underlines:

*“The EU should turn its global role and broad networks into powerful tools of global transformation. By aligning its external policies to the global common good expressed in the 2030 Agenda with the SDGs, the EU can only bolster its long-term strategic autonomy. The EU should work closely with the G21 Presidencies of Brazil (2024) and South Africa (2025) and the G7 Presidencies of Italy (2024) and Canada (2025) to get the SDG agenda back on track. Within both groups, the EU, France, Germany, and Italy should form a dedicated ‘Team Europe for the SDGs’ to strive for an open and cooperative international order to advance global sustainable development. In today’s world, international cooperation must progressively become mutually transformative, giving partners a voice and means also in the European Financial Architecture as well as regarding policy measures and developments in the EU that highly affect them.”*

**The report is accessible [here](#)** (available online from 24 January 2024 at 11:59 pm CET). The websites and data visualization links are available below.

Website: <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>

Data Visualization: <https://eu-dashboards.sdginde.org/>

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**The SDGs are not being achieved in Europe and globally; persisting and rising inequalities *within* and *across* European countries must be addressed.**

Multiple and simultaneous health, security, geopolitical, climate, and financial crises led to a slowdown of SDG progress on average in the EU, driven notably by slow progress on socio-economic outcomes and environmental goals. Finland tops the SDG Index this year (for the fourth year in a row), yet even countries at the top of the SDG Index face significant challenges in achieving several SDGs. The EU faces its biggest SDG challenges in responsible consumption and production, climate and biodiversity, sustainable land-use and diets, and in promoting convergence in SDG progress across its Member States.

This year’s edition also highlights challenges related to the ‘Leave No One Behind’ principle included in the 2030 Agenda. The ‘Leave No One Behind’ Index (LNOB) included in the report measures *within* country inequalities across four dimensions: extreme poverty and material deprivation; income inequality; gender inequality; and access to and quality of services. The Index highlights **minimal progress and even reversal across three of the four dimensions** for most European countries since 2020. The situation is particularly alarming regarding the sub-dimension “access to and quality of services,” where 32 out of 34 European countries covered by the Index show no progress or reversal in progress. The effective functioning of European democracies and institutions, which are at the heart of the sustainable development transition,



depend on the capacity of the EU leadership and Member States to provide equal opportunities, protect the most vulnerable, and boost education and skills for all.

As reflected in previous editions, the report also finds that the EU is responsible for significant negative “international spillovers”, driven partly by unsustainable consumption and international supply chains.

### **Towards a new European Deal for the Future**

In June 2024, the citizens of the EU will elect the new European Parliament. The EU’s incoming leaders will be responsible for agreeing to the next EU seven-year budget (2028-2035) and negotiating the next global agenda for sustainable development to continue the SDGs beyond 2030. In the current fragmented and multipolar world, the EU’s leadership must adopt a more ambitious, integrated, and coherent approach to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs at home and internationally. Complementing the ESDR 2023/24 report, a group of 200+ scientists, experts, and practitioners from 25 European countries also published today a joint Call for Action targeting political parties and the future EU leadership to lay the foundation for a new **European Deal for the Future** with **ten priority actions**:

1. **Respond to the grave danger of negative “social tipping points” by significantly reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion of European citizens.**
2. **Double down efforts to achieve net-zero emissions in the EU by 2050, with major breakthroughs by 2030.**
3. **Strengthen regional and local authorities in achieving the SDGs, including regularly monitoring and reporting SDG progress at all levels.**
4. **Curb negative international spillovers and support the transformation towards a sustainable trade system.**
5. **Leverage Team Europe for global SDG diplomacy and strengthen diverse and universal formats, especially the United Nations.**
6. **Step up Europe’s multilateral role by leading global efforts to reform the global financial architecture.**
7. **Re-focus the EU’s international partnerships on the SDGs and move towards mutually transformative cooperation.**
8. **Mobilize the financial means for the transformations toward a sustainable future.**
9. **Institutionalize the integration of the SDGs into strategic planning, macroeconomic coordination, budget processes, research and innovation missions, and other policy instruments.**
10. **Establish new permanent mechanisms for structured and meaningful engagement with civil society, including youth, and within the European Parliament on SDG pathways and policies.**

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Europe Sustainable Development Report is part of the larger Sustainable Development Report (SDR) series. Since 2015, the SDR provides the most up-to-date data to track and rank the performance of Europe and all UN Member States on the SDGs. This year’s ESDR covers the 27 EU Member States, four countries of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland), the United Kingdom, and EU candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and



Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Türkiye).<sup>1</sup> The report was prepared by a group of independent experts at SDSN and SDSN Europe and is co-designed and co-created by and with civil society in Europe. This year's edition builds on three workshops and one online public consultation organized between April and November 2023. The methodology is based on the global edition of the Sustainable Development Report, which was peer-reviewed by Cambridge University Press and Nature Geoscience, and statistically audited in 2019 by the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC).

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#### **About SDSN**

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. SDSN mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. We aim to accelerate joint learning and promote integrated approaches that address the interconnected economic, social, and environmental challenges confronting the world.

#### **About SDSN Europe**

Established in 2020, SDSN Europe mobilizes and coordinates the knowledge and science across SDSN networks in Europe in support of a sustainable and resilient European recovery. With nineteen national and regional networks of universities and knowledge institutions in the EU, and over 540 member organizations across the entire continent, SDSN is ideally placed to provide evidence-based policy development in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to their very recent accession to the status of candidate country, and in light of significant data gaps and lags, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are not included in this year's edition.