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**Press Release: Europe Sustainable Development Report 2025**

## **New SDSN Report Reveals the State of Sustainable Development in Europe and Priorities for the Newly Established EU Leadership**

**Paris, France** (January 29, 2025) — The Europe Sustainable Development Report 2025 (ESDR), a new report released today by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), reveals waning SDG advancement and persistent social, environmental, and biodiversity challenges across the European Union (EU) underscoring the need for the new EU leadership to reaffirm its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The sixth edition of the ESDR, which includes the SDG Index and Dashboards, assesses SDG progress in 41 states, including all 27 EU member states, nine EU candidate countries, four European Free Trade Agreement countries, and the United Kingdom. Notably, the report demonstrates an overall lag in SDG progress across the EU, with **the pace of SDG progress over the 2020-2023 period more than two times lower (+0.8 points) than the 2016-2019 period (+1.9 points)**. The Report also highlights Europe’s continuing environmental and biodiversity challenges, particularly related to SDG 2 and sustainable food and land systems. This year’s ESDR is accompanied by a new study produced in collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), offering insights into the transformation of the EU’s agri-food system. The study’s results show that demand-side measures, especially dietary shifts, must be prioritized for sustainable agri-food systems and improved health outcomes in the EU.

“The world is increasingly dangerous, unstable, and uncertain. Nearly eighty years after the creation of the United Nations, war and geopolitical tensions among major powers impact livelihoods everywhere and represent a major setback for sustainable development in Europe and globally,” said **Guillaume Lafortune, Vice President of the SDSN and lead author of the Report**. “At the same time, people, and especially young people, want sustainable development. With the size of the global economy and the technologies available, the world has the potential to *fully* achieve sustainable development! It is the historic responsibility, but also the strategic interest of the new EU leadership, to uphold the universal principles of the UN Charter and implement the SDGs, notably by forging new partnerships in a truly multipolar world. Concretely, in June 2025, Spain — a European country — will host the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Financing for Development. This is a critical milestone for the EU and the world to scale-up and align international financing flows for sustainable development by 2030 and well into the next decades.”

The Europe Sustainable Development Report 2025 is accessible [here](#). The websites and data visualization links will be available once the embargo is lifted on January 28, 2025 at 6 pm CET.

Report Card: <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/reports/europe-sustainable-development-report-2025>

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

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**Study on Sustainable Food Systems and SDG 2 with the EESC:** <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/publications-other-work/publications/sustainable-food-systems-driver-implementation-sdgs>



“We only have five years ahead of us to implement the Agenda 2030, and sustainable food systems are a crucial driver for the implementation of the SDGs. To accelerate action, we need more ambitious mechanisms to safeguard the livelihoods of farmers, small-scale food producers, and other stakeholders. We must also tackle unfair distribution in the supply chain and ensure a just transition,” added **Peter Schmidt, EESC NAT Section President**. “Meaningful and structured engagement with civil society, including youth, in policy making for sustainable food systems will ensure that no one is left behind.”

**The pace of SDG progress has slowed down in Europe, with persisting inequalities *within* and *across* European countries.**

Globally, 19 of the 20 countries that top the SDG Index are European countries (Sachs et al., 2024), mostly EU member states. Yet, on average, the pace of SDG progress in the EU over the 2020-2023 period was more than two times lower than over the 2016-2019 period. And in some of the most advanced regions, including Western Europe and Northern Europe, SDG performance has slightly declined since 2020 due to declining trends in socio-economic goals.

Northern European countries continue to lead this year’s SDG Index, with Finland ranking first for the fifth year in a row, followed by Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and Norway. However, these countries still face major challenges in achieving at least two of the global goals. Progress is significantly uneven across EU countries, as highlighted in the Report’s Leave No One Behind Index (LNOB), which measures inequalities within countries in opportunities, well-being, and access to and quality of services, and includes a new indicator on the disability employment gap. The Baltic States and Central and Eastern European countries rank at the bottom of the LNOB index, and EU candidate countries also face challenges. Across the region, while many countries have made progress on gender equality, income inequality and access to services remain stagnant, and poverty and material deprivation scores have declined on average since 2020.

**Progress on SDG 2 is especially off-track in the EU; The transition towards healthier diets should remain an important priority to transform the agri-food system in Europe and achieve other health, climate, and biodiversity goals.**

The EU continues to confront acute challenges related to healthy diets and the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of its agricultural systems. An accompanying study to the ESDR 2025, conducted by the SDSN and the EESC, building on new survey data and using the methodology developed by the Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land-Use, and Energy (FABLE) Consortium, takes stock of SDG 2 in the EU and presents new insights on how to advance its agri-food system. Results demonstrate that adopting healthy diets is critical to simultaneously achieving SDG 2, but also health, climate mitigation, and biodiversity targets in the EU. The study also underscores the need for new stakeholder engagement mechanisms at the regional and national levels for effective policy implementation, as well as mechanisms to safeguard the livelihoods of farmers, small-scale food producers, and other stakeholders to ensure a just transition.

**The EU generates significant negative spillover effects, primarily due to unsustainable consumption and international supply chains.**

The 2025 Spillover Index for Europe included in the ESDR 2025 comprises 15 indicators encompassing environmental and social spillovers embodied in trade; spillovers related to economic and financial flows; and peacekeeping and security spillovers. The results demonstrate that trade-based negative spillover impacts in the EU often account for at least 20 to 30% of the total footprint in many member states.



**To accelerate SDG implementation in the region over the 2024-2029 period, the Report outlines four overarching priorities for the new EU Leadership.**

1. Collectively scale-up investments in clean energy and digital technologies now in the EU and lay the foundations for an ambitious investment strategy well into the next decade notably via the adoption of an ambitious Clean Industrial Deal and Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2035.
2. Strengthen pro-social measures to address the social consequences of inflation and the direct and indirect consequences of rising geopolitical tensions.
3. Address the negative health and environmental impacts of unsustainable consumption, including via a just transition toward healthier and more sustainable diets.
4. Harness SDG/ Green Deal Diplomacy with all regions, uphold the principles established in the UN Charter, and support an ambitious reform of the UN system and the Global Financial Architecture (GFA). The forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) hosted by EU Member State, Spain, in June 2025 provides a critical opportunity for the EU to advance its leadership of the reform of the GFA and to support unlocking further private and public capital to support the achievements of the SDGs.

In addition, the Report calls on the three pillars of the new EU leadership — the European Commission, the Council of the EU, and the European Parliament — to issue a joint political statement this year reaffirming the EU's commitment to achieving the SDGs. It also recommends that the European Commission publish a second Voluntary Review ahead of the next 2027 United Nations SDG Summit at the Heads-of-States' level.

The ESDR 2025 was prepared by a group of independent experts at the SDSN, is co-designed and co-created by and with civil society in Europe and is published with the support of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union. 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. The 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. For more information, visit [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org).