



European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network

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Contribution from the Co-Chairs of the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development to the public hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee on the EU Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'

Dear Mr Lohan, Dear Mr Schmidt,

In prelude to the public hearing on the EC Reflection Paper '*Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*' organized by the EESC (Section NAT), we invite you to take note of the current observations among EEAC-Networkⁱ member councils with regard to the Commission's Reflection Paper.

We welcome the EU Reflection Paper's scope, analysis, holistic approach and the four policy foundations for a sustainable future.ⁱⁱ Within these four key-policy domains, special attention needs to be paid to matters such as product design, sustainable consumption patterns,ⁱⁱⁱ transport,^{iv} buildings,^v enhanced sustainable food production^{vi} and consumption,^{vii} as well as to the need for a fair but in time transition process.^{viii} We also furthermore share the European Commission analysis that there is a need to step up efforts to implement existing policies to enhance a circular economy. We also welcome the level of ambition of the Commission with regard to future-proof energy as well as the Commission's aim to achieve sustainability from farm to fork and to develop a socially fair transition.

We also noted the following with regard to the Reflection Paper: 1) insufficient mentioning of the link between the need to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda in order to strengthen security within the EU, its periphery and globally^{ix} and 2) the lack of references to the role of monetary policies. This is a significant weakness in this paper.

The Reflection Paper should focus attention on the issue of question what measures should be taken at which governance level. While it would be beneficial to sustainable development to consider re-distributing some policy areas to EU-level (e.g. fiscal policies), the subsidiarity principle should be properly respected at all times.



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We would like to conclude our observations by adding that the less positive contributions by the EU – with regard to sustainable development – should be recognized and included in the Reflection Paper, which portrays the EU only as a front runner and promotor of sustainable development (Global Trial Blazer in SD). While we laude the Commission in its attempt to strike a balance between the challenges and accomplishments of our continent with regard to sustainability, the reality of our planet's condition and the EU's role in that requires a more honest assessment.

Based on the current observation by EEAC member councils, we – the co-chairs of the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development – would like to underline the following:

1. We value the work done by the European Commission by presenting this Reflection Paper and we urge continued action. We therefore call upon you to underline the importance of immediate action in the EESC Opinion. The new Commission needs to present an action plan immediately that includes specific action and ambitious timetables. As far as we are concerned, we will make an effort to put the message of 'action' across to national and sub-national governments and parliaments.
2. We would welcome a European strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a framework for joint actions.¹ However, to ensure a truly transformative approach, a well-balanced division of tasks among different governance levels should be achieved, in line with the EU treaties. We invite you to consider this matter when preparing the EESC Opinion.
3. Furthermore, we ask the EESC to second our call for the integration of all major policy areas towards attaining the SDGs. Of particular importance are: circular economy policies, common agricultural policies, energy and climate change policies, trade policies, sustainable finance and economic policies and incentives, as well as development cooperation. We would like to underline that integration of major policy areas does not just mean mainstreaming the SDGs in the 10 President Juncker priorities as done so far, this should be considered inadequate.
4. We invite you to refer to successful working method examples and call for a follow-up (e.g. in the field of circular economy and sustainable finance) and to stress the importance of enhanced inter-DG and inter-Commissioner cooperation.
5. To conclude, we would like to stress that there seems to be a legitimacy crisis in the EU, which reinforces a latent sense of distrust among citizens towards issues relating to sustainable development. While distrust increases, the sheer size of the transition towards a sustainable Europe by 2030 necessitates inclusion and trust. We wish to highlight one instrument to enhance this inclusion: the science-society-policy dialogue. Consequently, we would welcome the continuation of the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Union (MSP). However, we would like to add the importance of an MSP that truly reflects the multi-layered governance of the EU. We ask you to also take this view into consideration when drafting the EESC Opinion.

¹ [Message of Maastricht](#) by the EEAC member councils Chairs (2017)



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President and Rapporteurs, we hope that these insights and provisional conclusions are beneficial to your important endeavour. We stand ready to provide further input to the EESC-SDO, if that were considered useful.

Sincerely yours,

Arnau Queralt-Bassa

Gábor Bartus

Co-Chairs of the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development

ⁱ The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) is a European network of advisory bodies established by national or regional governments or parliaments. EEAC members offer independent advice to their respective national or regional governments and parliaments related to the environment and sustainable development. Fourteen advisory bodies from eleven European countries and regions are member of the EEAC Network. www.eeac.eu

ⁱⁱ The four policy foundations include: 1. From linear to circular economy; 2. Suitability from farm to fork; 3. Future-proof energy, buildings and mobility; 4. Ensuring a socially fair transition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute for European Environmental Policies, [Sustainable consumption – policy approaches for systems change](#) (2018) Brussels, Belgium

^{iv} German Council on the Environment, [Time to take a turn: climate action in the transport sector](#) (2017) Berlin, Germany.

^v Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure [Warmly recommended](#) (2018) The Hague, The Netherlands

^{vi} Council for Sustainable Development in Catalonia (2018) [Feeding on future](#): Towards a productive, sustainable, resilient, healthy and responsible food system universally accessible in Catalonia. Barcelona, Spain.

^{vii} Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (2018) [Sustainable and healthy](#), The Hague, The Netherlands

^{viii} German Council on Global Change (2018) [Just & In-Time Climate Policy: Four Initiatives for a Fair Transformation](#). Berlin, Germany

^{ix} Institute for European Environmental Policies (2018) [Reinforcing Environmental Dimensions of European Foreign and Security Policy](#). Brussels, Belgium