

# EEAC Annual Conference 2018: Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030

## *Key leverages for transformation*

11 October 2018, Berlin

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Realizing an ambitious and global sustainability transformation in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires global action across all counties and policy areas. As the EEAC Network, we bring together the forces of academia, civil society, the private sector and public bodies to push towards a *Sustainable Europe* in the very spirit of the 2030 Agenda with its 17 SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

However, implementing this Agenda and Agreement requires a sustainability transformation that so far remains an abstract ambition in many areas. In a time of political uncertainty, the European Union and its member states should use ongoing policy processes as windows of opportunities to overcome key lock-ins for transformative change.

To advance the sustainability agenda within and beyond Europe, the 26th EEAC Annual Conference will be dedicated to identifying key leverages for transformation. During the conference, breakout groups will provide focal points for substantial debates: How does governance need to be reshaped in order to allow future-oriented decision-making? How can sustainability finance be used as a lever for transformative change? In which ways does digitalization need to be shaped and designed in order to contribute to sustainability?

The break-out groups will be framed via high-level panel discussions and policy keynotes. The EEAC conference thus creates a discussion forum for European and national high-level experts from academia, society and politics to contribute to a Sustainable Europe.

### BREAKOUT GROUPS

- ***“Environmental Governance: reshaping institutions and policy for transformative changes”***

European environmental policy is facing a veritable crisis. Economic crises in the aftermath of the breakdown of the financial markets, the pressure of globalization, the rise in populist

sentiments, accompanied by a fall of trust in key societal institutions like media, science and government do challenge a transformative sustainability agenda. Some would even argue that there is little legitimacy for ambitious and progressive political action for sustainable development. Environmental governance is thus in need of a bold self-affirmation: Europe's future and prosperity are dependent on the successful implementation of a transformative sustainability agenda across key policy fields and sectors until 2030.

This conference session will address the need for changes in political institutions as well as in the organization of the decision-making process to overcome incrementalism to eventually foster future-oriented decision-making. Moreover, conference participants will be invited to discuss options to mobilize and integrate existing scientific knowledge as well as civic engagement into policy-making to achieve a sustainable Europe while also restoring trust into democratic institutions. These challenges will be faced at the interface between European and national perspectives.

➤ ***“Sustainable Finance: Reshaping the finance sector as transformative lever”***

The financial sector plays a crucial role in sustainably transforming economies and societies and in preserving the global commons. Capital flows impact the environmental and social consequences of the real economy, while at the same time the finance sector is learning about environmental, political, economic and societal risks affecting investments. It is high time for strong and robust structures that enhance and ensure sustainable development.

This conference session will invite participants to exchange knowledge, practices and viewpoints with regard to sustainable finance. The main question will be whether and how advisory councils on the environment and sustainable development and other relevant partners are willing to challenge sustainable finance and whether there is common ground for joint initiatives at the European level?

➤ ***“Turning Digitalization into a Lever for Sustainability: Where is the European Vision?”***

“Digitalization” is often experienced and presented as an unstoppable, accelerating process that societies, industries and individuals should adapt to or prepare for. It is, however, not a force of nature, but a multitude of developments driven by human visions, economic calculations and political interests. The plethora of new technologies and possibilities emerging could thus become a powerful force for reaching long-standing societal goals like safeguarding natural resources, ensuring social inclusion and unfolding a revolution in education and cooperation.

This conference session will provide expertise and space for discussion of a European vision for linking digitalization to sustainability goals. Which existing ideas seem promising and how can we build on them? What must be done now in the European societies to strategically direct the potentials of digital technologies for the benefit of a sustainable future? What are the political leverage points in the EU and the relevant European stakeholders in politics, economy, science and society to foster and implement such a common European vision?

## ADDRESSEES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference addresses experts from policy, society, science and the private sector working in the sustainability context in Europe. As hosts, EEAC's national and sub-national advisory councils on environment and sustainable development will enable a cooperative atmosphere which enhances further networking and exchange opportunities.

**The 26<sup>th</sup> EEAC Annual Conference is jointly organised by:**

**The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)**

**The German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU)**

**German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU)**

**The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network (EEAC)**

