

Draft for discussion at  
the Think2030  
conference

**THINK  
2030**

# Targets and indicators for a meaningful implementation of the European Green Deal



Institute <sup>for</sup>  
European  
Environmental  
Policy



# THINK 2030

Launched by IEEP and its partners in 2018, Think2030 is an evidence-based, non-partisan platform of leading policy experts from European think tanks, civil society, the private sector, and local authorities.

Think2030's key objective is to identify science-policy solutions for a more sustainable Europe.

**#THINK2030**

## **DISCLAIMER**

The arguments expressed in this report are solely those of the authors, and do not reflect the opinion of any other party.

## **THE REPORT SHOULD BE CITED AS FOLLOWS**

Citation will be added in the final version of the paper

## **AUTHORS**

Céline Charveriat, Eloïse Bodin, Cara Maetzu and Oscar Plannels (IEEP), with inputs from Guillaume Lafortune (SDSN)

## **CORRESPONDING AUTHORS**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We gratefully acknowledge helpful reviews and comments from Aphrodite Mourelatou (EEA), Barbara Bacigalupi (DG ENV), Claudia Hahn (DG ENV)



This work has been produced with the financial support of the LIFE Programme of the European Union. The paper reflects only the views of its authors.

# Contents

<b>Five key policy recommendations.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction: the context.....</b>	<b>7</b>
A five-year EU agenda and further .....	8
Lack of full implementation is a great concern to meet the environmental objectives .....	8
An incomplete framework for the implementation strategy for the SDGs. ....	9
Towards a new monitoring framework for EU's green deal? .....	9
Post COVID realities: recovery plans and beyond .....	10
<b>Completing the set of Europe's targets.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Designing fit-for-purpose progress indicators .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Example of means of implementation indicators for the European Green Deal .....	15
<b>Towards a stronger accountability framework .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Clearer accountability mechanisms for European Institutions .....	17
Promoting structural reform in Member States .....	18
Independent accountability mechanisms .....	21
<b>Annex: inventory of key policy targets with proposed next steps .....</b>	<b>23</b>



## Five key policy recommendations

- 1. Develop a comprehensive, salient and coherent set of indicators in line with sustainable development principles and harmonize timelines for targets:** To assess the European Green Deal, it is critically important to lay out a comprehensive, salient and coherent set of indicators, which in turn must be applied to the different policies and policy frameworks. Such indicators should be guided by key principles and concepts which are used for monitoring sustainable development: (a) the *do no harm* principle, (b) the *leaving no one behind* principle, (c) the *indivisibility* of the sustainability agenda, (d) and the *universality* of the SDG agenda. To reduce complexity, timelines for targets should also be harmonized among different policies and policy frameworks.
- 2. Headline indicators must be developed and implemented as part of one coherent set of indicators on the six priorities of the European Commission:** In line with the principle of the indivisibility of the sustainability agenda, a harmonized set of headline indicators would allow to operationalize the European Green Deal framework, enabling heads of states and governments and EU leaders to be informed about progress made in its implementation, and thus guiding decision-making. This enhanced, SDG-aligned monitoring framework could be introduced by the end of 2021 and must be coherent with other monitoring processes (e.g. 8<sup>th</sup> EAP and the semester). The green indicator framework should include two types of indicators: (a) indicators measuring distance to targets and (b) indicators monitoring means of implementation.
- 3. Introduce a new sustainability scoreboard within the European Semester.** The inclusion of a sustainability scoreboard would enable to align the European Semester, the European Green Deal policy targets and Member States policy-making, as well as guide investment decisions in the context of the recovery. Synergies should be created with scoreboard by introducing the concept of a sustainable wellbeing economy for all, ensuring that there are no trade-offs between social, environmental and economic aspects. Lastly, indicators within the Semester must be complementary to the wider set of environmental indicators of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP.
- 4. Ensure a more effective use of Member States and European enforcement mechanisms, as well as an enhanced public access to environmental justice must be accomplished:** A systematically facilitated public access to environmental justice and stricter infringement procedures would allow for an enhanced compliance with existing rules in fields such as natural capital protection and enhancement.
- 5. Integrate in the monitoring framework new targets and indicators regarding cross-border social and environmental spill-over effects:** In line with the principle of universality of the SDG agenda, such spill-over indicators should be integrated in SDG monitoring frameworks. Current information on spill-over effects on third countries is sparse and inconsistent.

6. **Create an annual report on progress against the six headline ambitions of the European Commission:** Well-renowned scientists from different disciplines should form an independent scientific advisory council, which would produce an annual report on the progress against headline indicators for the European Council. This initiative for an annual report could be complemented by a special summit at the level of heads of State and Government.
7. **Support greater youth involvement in democratic processes and ensure intergenerational equity:** It is essential to support greater youth involvement in elections and other democratic processes, starting from the local level, and to extend voting rights to 16-year-olds. The EU could create an EU Future Generation's Ombudsman that would advocate for further youth involvement and participation.

## Introduction: the context

With the approval and gradual deployment of the European Green Deal, the EU has committed to take ambitious action in order to reach climate neutrality by 2050, envisioning a new model of growth based on sustainability, wellbeing, and equity. This initiative responds to the urgency triggered by ever-increasing environmental degradation and the growing threat that climate change poses to Europe and the whole humanity. The 2020 State of the European Environment and Outlook<sup>1</sup>, released by the EEA, reiterated this urgency by stating that “Europe’s environment is at a tipping point.

We have a narrow window of opportunity in the next decade to scale up measures to protect nature, lessen the impacts of climate change and radically reduce our consumption of natural resources. Our assessment shows that incremental changes (...) are not nearly enough to meet our long-term goals. Our future wellbeing and prosperity depend on it.” Scientists<sup>2</sup> demonstrate that, in order to limit global warming below 1.5°C, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should be cut by at least 45% by 2030<sup>3</sup> while carbon neutrality should be reached by 2050.

By setting out a new vision to address environmental, social and economic challenges in a coherent way through the European Green Deal, European leaders are taking steps to a new model of growth, based on sustainability, wellbeing and equity.

While the European Green Deal sets a monitoring system with new objectives, further efforts are needed to lay out concrete quantitative targets and governance systems in order to properly track and enforce the enacted policies. A watered-down European Green Deal, which would fail to monitor progress towards the environmental and social objectives and the success of EU policies, would not be able to be assessed on its ambitious goals.

---

<sup>1</sup> European Environmental Agency (2020), The European environment — state and outlook 2020 Knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe.

<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change.

<sup>3</sup> However, the IPCC report states that the interquartile range is 40-60%. Hence, EU’s initiative to fix a 55% emissions reduction target by 2030 is highly welcomed.



## A five-year EU agenda and further

<b>2021</b> - Adoption of the 8th Environment Action Programme - Mandatory Green Public Procurement criteria and targets - Sustainable product policy legislative initiative - "Fit for 55 Package" - Single-Use plastics ban - 3 <sup>rd</sup> EIR package  <b>2022</b> - IPCC's 6 <sup>th</sup> Assessment Report  <b>2023</b> - 4 <sup>th</sup> EIR package	<b>2024</b> - New Commission - Installation of 6GW of renewable hydrogen electrolyzers  <b>2025</b> - 7 <sup>th</sup> State of the Environment Report - Collect 90% of single-use plastic drinks bottles - 5 <sup>th</sup> EIR package  <b>2027</b> - 6 <sup>th</sup> EIR package  <b>2029</b> - New Commission - 7 <sup>th</sup> EIR package	<b>2030</b> - SDGs deadline - Reduce 55% GHG emissions - Ensure that around 40% of energy comes from renewables. 40GW of renewable hydrogen electrolyzers - EU Farm to Fork Strategy targets (pesticides, excess of nutrients, antimicrobial resistance, organic farming). - 8 <sup>th</sup> State of the Environment Report - Renovation Wave: renovate 35 million inefficient buildings by 2030 - EU 2030 Biodiversity strategy restoration targets and 30% of protected land and sea in Europe. Halt global forest loss.
<b>2050: Climate Neutrality</b>		

## Lack of full implementation is a great concern to meet the environmental objectives

Despite some monitoring framework exist, significant efforts in support the implementation of existing and future climate and environment policies are needed for the EU to make effective progress towards its commitments. A significant implementation gap has been undermining EU environmental ambitions. In 2018<sup>4</sup>, the European Environment Agency (EEA) concluded that the EU was not on track to achieve some of its 2020 objectives regarding the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP<sup>5</sup>. In addition, the second Environmental Implementation Review adopted in 2019 singled out severe deficiencies in the field of the circular and low-carbon economy<sup>6</sup>. Some Member States must also better implement measures concerning water and energy savings, waste prevention<sup>7</sup>, recycling<sup>8</sup> and promotion of reuse and repair. Improving eco innovation performance is also an important challenge.

<sup>4</sup> European Environmental Agency (2018), Environmental indicator report 2018. In support to the monitoring of the Seventh Environment Action Programme. EAA Report No 19/2018

<sup>5</sup> See IEEP (2020), Closing the Gap: Implementing European Environmental Policies.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission. (2019). Environmental Implementation Review 2019: A Europe that protects its citizens and enhances their quality of life.

<sup>7</sup> According to the 2019 Communication, some Member States produce at least twice as much municipal waste per inhabitant than the Member State reporting the lowest value, and just nine Member States reduced their generation per capita in the period 2014-2016. It will be critically important to reduce such gaps among the Member States while improving the general performance.

<sup>8</sup> Several countries were actually at risk of missing the target of 50% waste recycling by 2020. The number of landfills was not in line with the Landfill Directive either.

Gaps are also identified on natural capital protection and enhancement. While the European Commission recognizes some progress, Member States should make efforts to improve the designation about Natura 2000, thus completing networks of nature protection areas, in particular in the marine environment. Beyond the development of such networks, compliance with rules governing existing protected areas remains a major challenge, which needs to be tackled through more effective use of Member State and European enforcement mechanisms and a more systematically facilitated public access to environmental justice.

## An incomplete framework for the implementation strategy for the SDGs.

In light of the limited influence that the previous sustainable development strategy<sup>9</sup> of the EU had on policy making, the European Commission decided not to design an EU overall SDGs strategy and instead opted for setting six headline ambitions<sup>10</sup> on environmental, social, economic and governance objectives, mainstreaming SDGs into sectoral policies, governance processes and instruments (e.g. European semester, better regulation). Commissioner Gentiloni, in his remarks at the press conference on the European Semester Winter Package, stated that «we are greening the European Semester and having the Sustainable Development Goals as a new pillar»<sup>11</sup>, thus including information on SDGs progress in the country reports. This is very welcome news.

It remains to be seen whether the mainstreaming of SDGs will be sufficient for the European Commission to create an over-arching coherent long-term strategy for the EU in line with the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and long-term goals to 2050. Siloes between Directorate Generals risk to undermine progress and there is no evidence-based and analytical framework for arbitrating --perceived or real--trade-offs between economic, social, environmental and security policies and investment decisions.

## Towards a new monitoring framework for EU's green deal?

The 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme (EAP), which set the framework for EU environmental policy between 2014 and 2020, is coming to an end. While its evaluation concluded that its core long-term objective of “living-well within the planet’s ecological limits.” was still relevant, there is much less evidence of the influence of that framework regarding the make-up of Member States policies<sup>12</sup>. A key issue which has been highlighted to explain such lack of influence was the plethora of objectives and indicators within the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP.

---

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2009), Mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 Review of the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development // European Commission. (2009). 2009 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy - Presidency Report

<sup>10</sup> Von der Leyden, U. (2019), A Union that strives for more: My agenda for Europe. Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2020), Remarks by Commissioner Gentiloni at the press conference on the European Semester Winter Package. 9

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2019), On the evaluation of the 7th Environment Action Programme.

In October 2020 the European Commission adopted proposal for a Decision establishing the 8<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme (EAP), which aims at guiding the implementation of environmental policy until 2030 and be the monitoring arm of the European Green Deal's environmental objectives. The monitoring framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP "will include, to the largest extent possible, existing monitoring tools and indicators mainly based on European statistics and data from the EEA and ECHA, thus avoiding duplication and limiting administrative burden for Member States"<sup>13</sup>. A key challenge will be to design a short list of key headline indicators which can guide decision-making at government level to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal and reach EU carbon neutrality by 2050.

### Post COVID realities: recovery plans and beyond

COVID19 crisis led to a historically unprecedented economic crisis, plummeting the global economy into the deepest recession since the Second World War. As the European economies continue to be heavily impacted by the sanitary crisis, the European Commission has tabled different actions to boost the recovery.

On 27 May 2020, the European Commission proposed a reinforced long-term EU budget for 2021-2027 and the temporary recovery instrument NextGenerationEU with the ultimate goal of rebuilding a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe. Later on, on 21 July 2020, EU heads of state or government reached an agreement on the package and since then, European institutions have held different trilateral political trilogues in order to fine-tune and operationalize the details of the deal. The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is the centrepiece of NextGenerationEU, and it is meant to mitigate and repair the impact of the coronavirus pandemic while fostering green investments and reforms, thus improving resilience and sustainability. Indeed, 37% of the allocated €672.5 billion euros must include expenditure related to climate. Such instrument will make available up to €312,5 billion in grants and €360 billion in loans<sup>14</sup>.

To access funding, Member States must prepare a recovery and resilience plans which must be submitted latest by 30 April 2021. This plan shall set out a coherent set of reforms with particular attention to challenges identified during the European Semester in the country-specific recommendations.

While the European Commission singles out the need for key performance indicators to monitor the implementation of the RRF and the achievement of the objectives, it recognizes that «[a] set of indicators will need to be further defined, in agreement with

---

<sup>13</sup> European Commission (2020), Proposal for a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on this point, see European Commission's related page.



the Member State concerned»<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the European Commission requires Member States to report on a quarterly basis on the progress made regarding their recovery and resilience plans.

COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown how citizens' health and well-being drives economic prosperity, stability and resilience, and vice-versa. Moreover, the role of environmental degradation in the propagation of zoonic diseases must not be under belittled: there is clear evidence that deforestation, by destabilizing natural ecosystems, can lead to such viral phenomenon. For instance, burning forests in order to extend agricultural land forces resident bats to fly elsewhere in search of food, potentially leading to increased contact with human activities<sup>16</sup>.

More than ever, the concept of a sustainable well-being economy for all should be put at the core of our policies and strategies and measuring progress towards a sustainable wellbeing economy will be critical. A willingness to redefine quality growth by going beyond currently used indicators was expressed by European Council, in October 2019, when adopting conclusions regarding the Economy of Wellbeing<sup>17</sup>.

COVID-19 also poses new challenges to the European Green Deal: In times of economic malaise, environmental policy ambition wanes and some policies are rolled back or dismantled, given its long-term and difficult to quantify nature<sup>18</sup>. Hence, in times of COVID-19, it is essential to remain ambitious and turn down any attempts to roll back policy, like the European Commission has done regarding the calls by industry to lift the ban on single-use plastics because of the pandemic<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, the President of the Commission has underlined that the European Green Deal remains a top priority in the European agenda despite the pandemic, calling for "building back a better Europe", in which sustainability and resilience remains at the core.

---

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2020), Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> See Smith, K. F., Goldberg, M., Rosenthal, S., Carlson, L., Chen, J., Chen, C., & Ramachandran, S. (2014). Global rise in human infectious disease outbreaks. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*, 11(101), 20140950

<sup>17</sup> Council of the European Union (2019), The Economy of Wellbeing – Draft Council Conclusions.

<sup>18</sup> See Burns, C., Eckersley, P., & Tobin, P. (2020). EU environmental policy in times of crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(1), 1-19; Skovgaard, J. (2014). EU climate policy after the crisis. *Environmental Politics*, 23(1), 1-17; Lekakis, J. N., & Kousis, M. (2013). Economic crisis, Troika and the environment in Greece. *South European Society and Politics*, 18(3), 305-331

<sup>19</sup> Simon, F. (2020), EU dismisses industry calls to lift ban on single-use plastics. Euractive.

## Completing the set of Europe's targets

According to a compilation done by IEEP of environmental related targets (see in annex), the EU has at least 80 quantitative policy targets that are relevant to climate and the environment, of which 23 must be met by the end of 2020. In addition, there are 12 quantitative policy targets related to other dimensions of sustainability, according to Eurostat<sup>20</sup>. At least 16 are translated into Member State-level targets.

Based on our own analysis of the 2018 progress report for the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP<sup>21</sup>, we see that in areas which have no quantitative target but only qualitative ones, there is a great risk for difference in interpretation at the implementation stage. It is also more arduous for the Commission to demonstrate that a member state might be in breach. Similarly, targets which are included in Communications rather than Regulations and Directives might be taken less seriously by Member States and therefore lack corresponding action plans and investments.

While the negotiation of quantitative targets directly applicable to each Member State through regulations and directives are the most difficult to achieve, they have the merit of supporting greater accountability. As the European Green Deal constitutes a flagship communication of the current Commission, there is the risk that commitment stops with the Commission led by the Presidency of Ursula Von Der Leyen. The EU must enshrine the objectives of the European Green Deal into legal obligations that would go beyond 2022 – while the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP is expected to accomplish such function, it is essential to underline the importance of targets and indicators. Of course, targets are not a panacea: political considerations and the lowest common denominator might actually lead to lock-in effects by setting too low targets and by discouraging frontrunners to go beyond them.

Another key factor which creates complexity are the different timelines for targets, which should ideally be avoided, especially in the case of areas which might have strong interdependencies.

There is a striking lack of targets within the current set up of the green deal which are centered around health, well-being and equity. For instance, it will be hard to operationalize the leaving no one behind principle without overall targets on poverty and inequality in the EU, following the lapsing of the 2020 targets.

---

<sup>20</sup> Eurostat (2019), Sustainable development in the European Union. Overview of progress towards the SDGs in an EU context. 2019 edition.

<sup>21</sup> European Environmental Agency (2018), Environmental indicator report 2018. In support to the monitoring of the Seventh Environment Action Programme. EAA Report No 19/2018

Last but not least, too few of Europe's domestic targets take into account potential negative or positive spillover effects on third countries, which is problematic as environmental integrity most often require for targets to become universal. – however, the available information is sparse and inconsistent. Social impacts assessments must be conducted as well, researching the impact of European environmental policy on child labour, work-related accidents or forced labour. Such information should be made available both for specific supply chains and on a global level. In conclusion, environmental and social cross-border spillover effects must be monitored and integrated within SDG monitoring frameworks

With these caveats in mind, following the framework of the green deal, we identify a number of gaps and weaknesses in the current set up of targets and make a number of recommendations (see annex) on how to complete the set of targets.



# Designing fit-for-purpose progress indicators

To assess the European Green Deal, it is critically important to lay out a comprehensive, salient and coherent set of indicators, which in turn must be applied to the different policies and policy frameworks<sup>22</sup>. Indicators can be key to democratic accountability – actually, several authors have advocated for a “politics of policy indicators” and for an evidence-based approach as the only way to ensure policy delivery<sup>23</sup>.

A list of indicators is currently being built as part of the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP to help monitor the progress towards the climate and environmental objectives of the European Green Deal . Alignment with key principles and concepts, which are used for monitoring sustainable development, will be essential including:

- The *do no harm* principle;
- *Leaving no one behind* principle, and within this the challenges posed by intra and intergenerational equity in Europe
- The *indivisibility* of the sustainability agenda, which means promoting sustainable well-being economy, which moves beyond the classical trade-offs between people, planet, prosperity and security)
- The *universality* of the SDG agenda, which requires addressing spill-over effects of Europe’s consumption on third countries.

The COVID crisis is showing that it is critical to add to this list, the need to strengthen economic, social, ecological, democratic resilience, so that individuals, communities, countries and Europe’s capacity to face a continuum of shocks is structurally enhanced. This resilience should not be understood as the capacity to keep things the way they are, but rather as transformative resilience, which enables systemic change.<sup>24</sup> .

**To operationalize such framework, the European Green Deal needs headline indicators as part of one coherent set of indicators on the six priorities of the EC.** This

---

<sup>22</sup> Dahl, A. L. (2012). Achievements and gaps in indicators for sustainability. *Ecological indicators*, 17, 14-19, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Bauler, T. (2012). An analytical framework to discuss the usability of (environmental) indicators for policy. *Ecological Indicators*, 17, 38-45. See also Pawson, R., 2006. Evidence-based Policy: A Realist Perspective. Sage, London, UK and Cairney, P. (2016). *The politics of evidence-based policy making*. Springer.

<sup>24</sup> Giovannini, E., Benczur, P., Campolongo, F., Cariboni, J., Manca, A.R. (2020). Time for transformative resilience: the COVID-19 emergency. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

will allow heads of states and governments and EU leaders to be informed about progress made in the European Green Deal implementation. **This enhanced, SDG-aligned monitoring framework could be introduced by the end of 2021**, with indicators relevant for the achievement of the European Green Deal and coherent with other monitoring processes (e.g. 8<sup>th</sup> EAP and the semester).

In terms of the green deal pillar, the green indicator framework should include *two types of indicators*:

- Measuring distance to targets (based on the proposed enhanced list of targets above)
- Monitoring means of implementation

#### Example of means of implementation indicators for the European Green Deal

<b>EU leadership</b>
Number of legislative proposals approved (vis-à-vis the original planning of the green deal)
Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming
Green funding as a share of total EU recovery funding
Environmental tax revenues (including from ETS) as a share of own resources
Greening of EU's development policy assistance and trade policies
<b>Implementation of the green deal framework by member states</b>
References to the European Green Deal in Member States legislation and/or existence of green deal coordination mechanisms at member State level
Implementation scoreboard of green deal initiatives by MS

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming within MS budgets
Environmental tax revenues as percentage of total tax revenues
Fossil fuel and other environmentally harmful subsidies
Public funding for just transition
R&D expenditure for sustainability
Green Public Procurement as a percentage of total procurement
<b>Take up of the green deal framework by society</b>
% of the EU population that knows about the European Green Deal
Purchase of sustainable products from EU citizens
Level of take-up in corporate sustainability schemes (such as EMAS or the Climate Pact)
Private employment in the green economy
Percentage of institutional investors portfolio investments in green finance

# Towards a stronger accountability framework

## Clearer accountability mechanisms for European Institutions

In its 2017 Environmental Implementation Review, the European Commission concluded that the implementation gap was partly due to a lack of integration and policy coherence within Member States. Ineffective governance in implementation, marked by a lack of capacity and/or coordination amongst competent authorities at national level, was another factor.

The European Green Deal and the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP, together with the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) and its specific recommendations to Member States, should act as mutually supporting commitments complementing each other and creating positive synergies between them. However, they pose challenges in terms of implementation as they create further complexities by having different timelines, targets, and indicators.

European policies' design and effectiveness can be improved by aligning Better regulation to SDGs and with stricter infringement procedures in case of non-compliance with sustainability measures. The European Commission pledged to improve its Better Regulation guidelines<sup>25</sup> and supporting tools that address sustainability. To this end, it is crucial that the Better regulation review considers integrating the Sustainable Development Goals making the better regulation a salient impact assessment framework for the SDGs in EU.

To further strengthen accountability, an **annual report on progress against the six headline ambitions of the European Commission should be created**. Similar to the process followed by the UNSG on the global SDG report, well-renowned scientists from different disciplines, possibly under the aegis of IDEA, should form a scientific advisory council, which would produce an annual report on the progress against headline indicators for the European Council<sup>26</sup>. This could be complemented by a special summit at the level of heads of State and Government.

Finally, building on lessons from youth councils and citizen's assemblies, it is essential to support greater youth involvement in elections and other democratic processes, starting from the local level, and to extend voting rights to 16-year-olds. The EU could

---

<sup>25</sup> See European Commission's *Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox* page for more information.

<sup>26</sup> IEEP, blog post, 2017, add the specific reference



create an EU Future Generation's Ombudsman that would advocate for further youth involvement and participation.

## Promoting structural reform in Member States

To make the European Green Deal a cornerstone to implement SDGs in the EU, the Commission must promote structural reform within Member States.

While such initiative of mainstreaming the SDGs in the European Semester is highly welcomed, further coordination of goals and targets in all European policies is needed. For instance, while the link between the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Semester has been largely addressed and highlighted, no strategy to integrate the SDGs in the RRF can be identified. Sustainability must be integrated in all EU policy frameworks, thus enhancing policy coherence<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, concerns have been raised in regards of indicators cherry-picking, as well as in regards of slow progress and lack of monitoring of externalities (the overall supply chains must be considered)<sup>28</sup>. Most green measures failed to achieve a systemic and lasting change, as most countries left in place environmentally-harmful subsidies and inadequate regulatory regimes. Building on these lessons, forthcoming economic and social recovery plans should be designed to support systemic change aligned with SDGs. Considering the current crisis, policy frameworks and funding programmes should be reoriented to strengthen societal resilience, not just through economic or financial systems, but also for health, social, societal and ecological systems

As new indicators for monitoring purposes in the RRF will be introduced, **the EU should align, its different policy processes linked to sustainability with a common set of targets and indicators**. Plans that Member States have to produce to demonstrate how they will use recovery funds, achieve national and EGD targets, such as the NECPs, the LTS plans, as well as the CAP strategic plans, Member State reports and independent reviews of progress (e.g. National Emissions Ceiling Directive reporting) should be aligned.

*The **European Semester process** is key to monitor and push for the implementation of the European Green Deal as the funds of the RRF are directly linked to*

---

<sup>27</sup> To know more about the SDGs and strategies for policy coherence, see European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) (2016), Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the European Union: Constructing an EU approach to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development. Discussion Papers.

<sup>28</sup> SDG Watch Europe. (2020). Progress at a snail's pace. Statement by the SDG Watch Europe Steering Group.

*the country specific recommendations. To better mainstream SDGs within the process and further drive the concept of **sustainable economy** in the Member States, we recommend the following:*

**The process of the European Semester should be used to assess progress towards the achievement of green deal policy targets by each Member State** and to guide investment decisions as part of the recovery. This is why it is necessary to include **a new sustainability scoreboard<sup>29</sup> within the semester**. The semester should also be harnessed as to tailor recommendations according to the distance to target and to back-casting methodologies.

- Synergies should be created with the social scoreboard by introducing the concept of a **sustainable wellbeing economy for all**. Measuring progress towards a sustainable wellbeing economy is critical in order to avoid unnecessary trade-offs between social, environmental and economic aspects.
- There should be **complementarity and synergies between indicators within the Semester – whose main audience objectives would be policy-makers in charge of macroeconomic, financial and industrial policies within Member States – and the wider set of environmental indicators of the 8th EAP**, whose audience would include a wider set of stakeholders in Member States, including those in charge of implementation and enforcement of the acquis. Likewise, **there should be complementarity between indicators within the Semester and indicator sets within major flagship policies**.
- **The EU should align funding, incentives, and compliance mechanisms**. Two of the key reasons for the failure in implementing the European environmental acquis and achieving policy objectives of the EU are the lack of adequate funding and the lack of effective compliance-assurance mechanisms. More adequate EU funding for structural reform in Member States will partly depend on the recovery funds. But it will also be important to ensure the full alignment of programming exercises with each Member State. These should be based on an assessment of needs from Member States based on the distance to targets. To deliver the Green Deal, it would also be essential to foster climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in Member State budgets. The Communication on the Green Deal rightly calls for a process to support the greening of national budgets of the Member States.

---

<sup>29</sup> Charveriat, C. and Bodin, E. (2020), Delivering the Green Deal: the role of a reformed Semester within a new sustainable growth strategy for the EU, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP).

- **Supporting greater policy coherence for sustainable development at the Member State level.** This means a whole-of-Commission approach towards policy recommendations for Member States from the European Commission to Member States. Such a change can only be achieved through reforms in the structures of the European Commission to break away from siloes, as well as the strengthening of the DG in charge of current structural reform support. This DG should have equal expertise in, and competence over, the three key dimensions of sustainability. Greater coherence should also be ensured through approval by the College of Commissioners of country recommendations in the Semester, in contrast with the current situation in which only DG ECFIN leads on approving the recommendations.
- **Support to trickle up governance and public participation.** Efforts must be stepped up in terms of promoting take up of the green deal and climate neutrality by civil society, the private sector and by local authorities. This requires a simplification of EU and MS funding mechanisms linked with the green deal, ensuring that the climate pact enables greater ambition from different stakeholders as well as exploring other forms of participative governance (see the Think2030 paper on future generations).

**The support of the greater public will be key to close the implementation gap as well as accountability at all level** (EU, MS, but also subnational). Structural reform fatigue is prevalent in most Member States. This is partly due to a lack of understanding of reforms by citizens. The different EU policy processes (including the European Green Deal) are not well-known by EU citizens; hence its content is not discussed in the public sphere. This can allow policymakers and opinion shapers to misrepresent recommendations from the EU institutions or to dilute responsibilities for the lack of progress. Making the process more visible and accessible would increase the likelihood of greater public support and would enhance the accountability of the Commission and Member States to citizens. At a minimum, citizens, parliamentarians and relevant governmental authorities, as well as mainstream media, should have the capacity to see how their country is performing across sustainability dimensions; to be aware of upcoming review processes for key policy areas; to get access to the Commission recommendations, the Country Reports and the submissions to the European Commission, in addition to independent evaluations of progress towards the implementation or the achievement of policy objectives. One of the ways to achieve higher transparency would be to create a one-stop shop websites for each Member State. This transparency process should be also ideally accompanied by opportunities for inputs by national parliaments and civil society in each Member States into the country recommendation process.

## Independent accountability mechanisms

To ensure an independent assessment of both to foster Independent Science advisory council that would shorten the feedback loop and give independent assessment of the European Green Deal and the EU economic recovery<sup>30</sup>. This body, which should work in close collaboration with similar independent institutions in Member States, would be tasked with assessing the adequacy of both EU and Member States' green recovery plans and could also feed into the European semester process. To support democratic processes and influence decision-making, its recommendations should be made public and in close to real-time.

---

<sup>30</sup> Charveriat, C., Bausch, C., Treyer, S., Nilsson, M. & Müller, A. (2020), Europe's recovery plans must pass five sustainability tests. Think Sustainable Europe network.

---



## Annex: inventory of key policy targets with proposed next steps<sup>31</sup>

	Current status of targets	Next steps
<i>Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed target of at least 55% will be replacing the previous targets of 40% pending agreement by the European council in the European Climate Law.</li> <li>Net-zero GHG by 2050 will replace the previous long-term target of 80-95% cut.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual reduction targets in Fossil Fuel subsidies</li> <li>Revision of EU climate policy and legislation in line with revised target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will targets be binding on individual MS?</li> <li>Sector specific targets?</li> <li>A separate target for carbon sinks?</li> <li>A specific target for the land use sector?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>Supplying clean affordable and secure energy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 32 % by 2030 (binding);</li> <li>At least 32.5% increase in energy efficiency (indicative);</li> <li>14% of fuel for transport purposes to come from renewable sources by 2030</li> <li>first generation biofuel, based on food crops, must be capped at 2020 levels (with an extra 1%) and in no case exceed 7% of final consumption of road and rail transport); the share of advanced biofuels and biogas must be at least 1% in 2025 and at least 3,5% in 2030.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of targets in-line with revised GHG target.</li> <li>Review of the Renewable Energy Directive in June 2021 will consider strengthening the renewable heating and cooling target</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> To be reviewed based on outcomes of the thematic policy papers of Think2030. A column based on achievements to date (EEA SOER 2020) will also be added after the conference.

Draft for discussion at the Think2030 conference

<i>Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy</i>	<p>There are a number of quantitative targets for recycling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-use and recycling of waste materials (paper, metal, plastic and glass from households) increased to a minimum of overall 50% by weight by 2020</li> <li>• Recycling 65% of municipal waste by 2030</li> <li>• Recycling 55% of packaging waste by 2030</li> <li>• Reduce landfill to maximum of 10% of municipal waste by 2030</li> <li>• MS to achieve a 90% collection target for plastic bottles by 2029</li> <li>• Plastic bottles to contain at least 25% of recycled content by 2025 and 30% by 2030</li> <li>• Single-use plastic plates, cutlery, straws, balloon sticks and cotton buds banned by 2021.</li> <li>• Targets for waste reduction (revised Waste FD only requires EC to consider such targets by 2024)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A target reduction on the consumption of virgin materials in the EU as proposed by the parliament</li> <li>• Targets targeting overconsumption, such as per capita material footprint.</li> </ul>
<i>Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way</i>	<p>There is a target for the recovery of construction and demolition waste which is lapsing in 2020 as well as a target for all buildings to be nearly zero emissions building by 2021.</p> <p>Renovation wave strategy proposes to double renovation rates by 2030</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get carbon emissions down in line with our 2050 targets, building renovation rate must increase to at least 3 percent.</li> </ul>
<i>A zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air: Reduce by 2030 the percentage of EU urban population exposed to concentrations above the WHO guideline values to 10 % for PM2.5, PM10 and O3 and to 0 % for N20</li> <li>• Priority hazardous substances under Directive 2008/105/EC are eliminated from surface waters in accordance with the WFD by 2028</li> <li>• Targets for the number of sites with quality bathing water;</li> <li>• Sustainable use of pesticides: There is a target for MS to submit action plans with quantitative targets on the sustainable use of pesticides. There are no quantitative targets so far within the newly proposed chemicals for sustainability strategy of the EU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air limit values should reflect emerging consensus from the WHO. MS must take action to meet existing limit values. Too many are failing.</li> <li>• Water: emerging substances need to be tackled, such as endocrine disrupters.</li> <li>• Soil: Targets for the number of sites or km2 to be decontaminated (currently 2.8 million sites)</li> <li>• Additional quantitative targets for reducing environmental stressors to health and well-being (such as noise pollution) as well as targets to improve access to nature.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention and reduction of marine pollution: national targets under MFSO</li> <li>• EU objective to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield for fisheries (also addressing IUU fishing)</li> <li>• Priority hazardous substances under Directive 2008/105/EC should be eliminated from surface waters in accordance with the WFD by 2028</li> <li>• Conserving 10% of Europe's seas by 2020</li> <li>• Sustainable abstraction of groundwater by 2020 (below 20% of available renewable water resources)</li> <li>• No net loss of biodiversity by 2020</li> <li>• Target to restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystem by 2020</li> <li>• 80% of bird species to be either secure or improving by 2020</li> <li>• Reduction in excess acid deposition of 74% and 39% in forest areas and surface freshwater areas respectively 43% reduction in areas or ecosystems exposed to eutrophication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved quantitative targets for restoration of ecosystems (in km<sup>2</sup>)</li> <li>• Water use remaining below a certain level of available renewable freshwater resources at sub/basin level (e.g. 20 % annually) and reduction of nitrate and phosphate in rivers (e.g. by 20-30 % by 2030). Water use and nutrient discharges should be consistent with Good Ecological Status of water bodies.</li> <li>• Strong targets for key marine pollution, such as litter. Current targets are not sufficient to address marine problems.</li> <li>• Targets for the overall quality of marine ecosystems (not adequately captured by Good Environmental Status under the MSFD).</li> <li>• Fisheries activity to be fully consistent with MSY, protection of ecosystems.</li> <li>• Annual reduction of land take compatible with a net zero land take by 2050 (for the 2000-2020 period the annual land take milestone not to be exceeded was 800-km<sup>2</sup>)</li> <li>• Target for biodiversity finance (% EU budget mainstreaming)</li> </ul>
<p><i>From Farm to Fork</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are targets regarding a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 30% by 2030 (Effort Sharing), a target for</li> <li>• Halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels (time-lines),</li> <li>• Reduction targets for ammonia and nitrates (National Emissions Ceilings Directive; The Nitrates directive )</li> <li>• MS action plans with quantitative targets under Directive 2009/128/EC on the sustainable use of pesticides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net zero GHG emissions from agriculture and forestry by 2050</li> <li>• Improvement of nitrogen balance from agricultural land (e.g. 1.5 or 2 % annually)</li> <li>• Reduction in animal protein consumption (e.g. 2 % annually)</li> <li>• 25% reduction of use of antibiotics in livestock production by 2030</li> <li>• 25% reduction of use of synthetic pesticides and a decrease of Harmonised Risk indicator by 2030</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>80% of EU citizens consume 400 grams of fruit and vegetables daily by 2030</li> <li>All MS to use the Copernicus earth observation system for farm management and agricultural policy management by 2025</li> </ul>
<i>Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are targets for: a) reducing GHG emission from transport by 2030 b) reducing by 14% the use of RE in total energy consumption for transport, b) average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new passenger cars c) the halving of the use of conventional cars in cities c) freight d) shipping d) the use of low carbon fuels by aviation</li> <li>build one million public electric charging points by 2025</li> <li>EC will announce "Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility" in late 2020 or 2021.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target date for EU wide phase out of all of Internal Combustion Engine vehicles (2035?)</li> <li>Zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandates for large corporate and public vehicle fleets</li> <li>Revise Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (AFID) to mandate targets for public vehicle charging infrastructure by Member State</li> <li>Coordinate bans of non-LEVs or ZEVs from cities from 2030</li> </ul>
<i>Financing the transition</i>	The climate mainstreaming target of 20% was not achieved in the past programming period <sup>32</sup> and is being replaced with a higher proposed target of 30%, although the methodology employed to track this figure has a number of problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target for environmental taxation as a share of total taxation</li> <li>Share of green assets as part of total assets of institutional investors</li> <li>Increasing the environmental integrity of the climate mainstreaming target of the MFF</li> <li>Including a target for biodiversity financing within the MFF</li> <li>Exploring targets for greening member states budgets and recovery plans based on a common methodology.</li> </ul>
<i>Leave no one behind</i>	With the 2020 poverty target lapsing (and no having been achieved), there will be no quantitative target left in terms of poverty and inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-2020 overall poverty and inequality targets</li> <li>Targets regarding budgets for just transition as a percentage of total budgets in the EU and in Member States</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> For more information, see European Commission's Supporting climate action through the EU budget page.

Draft for discussion at the Think2030 conference

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of territorial just transition plans with clear quantitative targets in terms of net job creation or re-training as a percentage of affected population</li><li>• Targets aiming at specific equity issues,, for instance the reduction of energy poverty in the EU.</li><li>• Targets regarding the percentage of population in low coastal areas covered through adaptation plans</li></ul>
<i>Mobilising research and innovation</i>	H2020 has a 35% mainstreaming target in the last programming period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To be developed after the Think2030 conference</li></ul>