



**To the attention of:**

The EU Heads of State and Government  
The President of the European Council

The President of the European Commission  
The Secretary-General of the European Commission  
The Members of the European Commission  
The Spitzenkandidaten

The President of the European Parliament  
The European Parliament Political Groups Chairs

07.12.2018

**SDG Watch Europe Open letter  
on the need for the EU to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Dear European Leaders,

Over the coming months you will be debating numerous important issues about the future of the EU, including its future priorities, as well as its governance, institutional and policy framework. As the leading EU civil society network committed to ensuring that Europe fully achieves the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **SDG Watch Europe wishes to express its serious concern that three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, the EU and its Member States still show very little sense of urgency or ambition about the actual implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the transition to sustainability.**

The EU has much work to do to provide a healthy, prosperous life for its citizens within the planetary boundaries. Similarly, the external effects of unsustainable European policies can be felt all over the world.

The current focus on economic growth policies at the expense of environmental, social and cultural concerns, the various bilateral free trade agreements being developed that do not serve sustainable development, new plans for deregulation within environmental programs, the failure to address increasing poverty, gender and other inequalities, social exclusion as well as security policies in violation of human rights are actually carrying Europe further away from its values and commitment to sustainability.

**The failure to address these common European challenges will lead to more environmental destruction, growing inequalities within and among countries, and in turn to more nationalism and populism and the weakening of the European project.**

The EU needs to reject governance and economic models that have failed to deliver meaningful progress towards sustainability, and put real and inclusive policy innovation – and not just technological advances – in the centre of the reform on how our economies and societies work. **The 2030 Agenda offers an opportunity to reconnect with the people, and prove that the European project serves present and future generations in areas that matter - instead of being dictated merely by political and vested interests.**

As Europe's political leadership, you are responsible for several important issues which can advance or undermine Europe's ability to shift towards sustainability in the coming decade.

For the purpose of these discussions, we would like to stress the **following, essential points**:

- The implementation of 2030 Agenda and the reporting on its progress, should not solely be the responsibility of the Member States but a priority for the EU itself. Many policy areas critical to sustainable development, such as agriculture, trade, employment, consumer policy and the EU budget, fall within the (shared) competences of the EU. **Adapting European internal and external policies alike towards sustainability and policy coherence is key for the success of the 2030 Agenda.**
- We urge you to develop a **governance framework** that is suitable for realizing the necessary reforms for sustainable development. A **fundamentally reformed European Semester** as part of a new EU governance cycle to coordinate sustainable development efforts in Europe is essential, in line with subsidiarity. Political efforts must be supported by a **sustainability-proofed Multiannual Financial Framework** post 2020<sup>1</sup>, which serves as an effective driver in the transition to sustainability. These reforms must be complemented by other effective **Mechanisms for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development** to ensure coherence between internal and external EU policies and efficiently advanced by the new institutional structure and political priorities set by the next European Commission and Parliament.
- We have urged you for some years now to produce a **comprehensive Implementation Strategy for a Sustainable Europe 2030 accompanied by a clear Implementation Plan**, based

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<sup>1</sup> See People's Budget and SDG Watch Europe 1) [Letter to the General Affairs Council, 7 November 2018](#) ; 2) [Position on the post 2020 MFF](#). 3) Recommended [horizontal sustainability principles for the future MFF](#), including, among others, European values, gender equality, reducing environmental pressures and promoting systemic change.

on an ambitious Reflection Paper on sustainable development to provide a strong and suitable template to actually put the EU on a sustainable path that promotes equality. Such a strategy is also called for by the Multi-stakeholder Platform on the SDGs<sup>2</sup>, the European Parliament in June 2017, the Council in June 2017<sup>3</sup> and the European Council in October 2018.

- We also urgently call on the EU **to report within Europe and at the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF)** on its 2030 Agenda implementation in both its internal and external policies, **with an honest stock-taking concerning all SDGs and targets and addressing their comprehensive, transformative and universal nature.**

We want to again express our support and help in establishing sustainability policies and practices across the EU and its member states, and speeding up the pace of implementation. We are willing to constructively and meaningfully participate in the policy processes, monitoring and implementation.

With more than 100 organizations in our cross-sectoral coalition across the EU, we represent a large number of European citizens calling for change in Europe: for a future that is positive and sustainable for all and viable for the planet.

Yours sincerely,

*Barbara Caracciolo,  
Deirdre de Burca,  
Ingeborg Niestroy,  
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Leida Rijnhout,  
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**Members of the SDG Watch Europe Steering Group on behalf of the following Civil Society Organisations:**

*Act Alliance EU  
ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy  
ASVIS – Italian Alliance for the Sustainable Development  
Caritas Europa  
CBM  
CEE Bankwatch Network  
CEEweb for Biodiversity  
CEV- European Volunteer Centre*

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<sup>2</sup> See [SDG Watch Europe Position Paper on Establishing a New EU Multi-stakeholder Platform](#), 21 February 2017.

<sup>3</sup> In June 2017, the Council called “to elaborate, by mid 2018, an implementation strategy outlining timeline, objectives and concrete measures, in all relevant internal and external policies”, which was echoed by the European Council Conclusions, in October 2018, calling for a comprehensive implementation strategy in 2019.



*Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe)*  
*Climate Alliance*  
*COFACE Families Europe*  
*Conservation International Europe*  
*Cooperatives Europe*  
*Culture Action Europe*  
*Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)*  
*Don Bosco International*  
*Don Bosco Network*  
*ECOLISE*  
*EU-CORD*  
*Eurochild*  
*EuroNGOs*  
*European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)*  
*European Disability Forum (EDF)*  
*European Environmental Bureau (EEB)*  
*European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)*  
*European Partnership for Democracy*  
*European Patients' Forum*  
*European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)*  
*European Volunteer Centre (EVC)*  
*European Women's Lobby*  
*European Youth Forum*  
*Fair Trade Advocacy Office*  
*FERN*  
*FORUS*  
*Friends of the Earth Europe*  
*Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)*  
*Global Call to Action Against Poverty Italy*  
*Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)*  
*Global Health Advocates*  
*Green Budget Europe*  
*HAND Association - Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid*  
*Housing Europe*  
*IFOAM – Organics International*  
*International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)*  
*International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN)*  
*Lifelong Learning Platform*  
*Light for the World International*  
*Lithuanian NGDO Platform*  
*Make Mothers Matter EU delegation*



*National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary*  
*National Youth Council of Ireland*  
*Nyt Europa*  
*Plan International EU Office*  
*Roundtable of Hungarian Civil Society Organisations for the Sustainable Development Goals*  
*Save the Children*  
*Search for Common Ground*  
*SKOP Malta*  
*Social Platform*  
*Soleterre – Strategie di Pace ONLUS*  
*SOLIDAR*  
*SOS Children's Villages*  
*Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future*  
*Stop AIDS Alliance*  
*Terre des Hommes*  
*The Danish 92 Group*  
*Transparency International EU*  
*Wetlands International – European Association*  
*Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)*  
*World Vision EU Representation Office*