

Dear Vice President Timmermans,

Thank you for attending the formal launch of SDG Watch Europe that took place in the North Rhein Westphalia Representation in Brussels on Thursday October 13th. We were honoured that you were able to attend and welcomed your intervention that evening. SDG Watch Europe agrees with you that the Sustainable Development Goals are a unique opportunity for Europe to take the lead in shaping our global future – a future where relations between nations, the nature of our economic structures, the relationship between human beings and our natural resources and relations between continents will all change.

Trying to shape momentous, fundamental change however takes courage, leadership and vision. If Europe wants to ensure that these changes move us in the right direction then this is the time for the EU to develop an **overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy that includes both internal and external action, including a plan of implementation, with concrete targets and timelines**. This strategy should **coordinate the EU's overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda, its 17 SDGs, 169 targets and the use of agreed indicators**, to help the EU and its member states focus clearly on what needs to be achieved, and how, and needs to go beyond 2020.

From the outset SDG Watch Europe has been calling for **civil society to be included as active partners in the entire SDG process, from planning to implementation and monitoring**. Civil society can play a vital role, bringing relevant experience, expertise and a necessary diversity to the table. We noted with interest your suggestion of creating a dynamic platform of different stakeholders linked to SDG implementation. As an independent and self-organising not-for-profit civil society alliance, SDG Watch Europe would welcome an opportunity to discuss this proposal further with your office.

In order to support the work of civil society, the EU and EC should take full advantage of the ongoing mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and discussions on a post 2020 MFF. **There is a need to ensure that the next MFF is “sustainability proofed” and that funding mechanisms and budget lines for civil society organisation and other stakeholder actions are aligned with new needs and ambitions linked to global and European challenges**. New windows should be created for more process work and holistic approaches to tackling these challenges.

As you highlighted in your speech at our launch, creating synergies between internal and external policies, and between (and even within) DGs is a challenge. That is why we urge the Commission to **fully incorporate and operationalise its own a Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development process**. This process could include, for example, the establishment of a structure involving several DGs for joint policy making, and the further development of the impact assessment system and tools to be used for vetting existing and new directives and strategies. Where the Council of the EU is concerned, Jumbo-meetings involving relevant councils should be used, (i.e. with social affairs, environment, agriculture, trade, development etc.) to guarantee greater policy coherence, at EU and member state levels.

Finally, in a “*post paternalistic*” society where open data and transparency are critical we welcome your suggestion to create an online platform where EU citizens can monitor progress and become aware of how the EU and its member states are succeeding or failing in the implementation of their SDG commitments. However for this online platform to be successful, there is a need to **develop strong monitoring, review and accountability mechanisms** and for there to be a **consultative process of indicator selection** by Eurostat. **We are also calling on the EU to ensure that this platform includes citizen-generated data** that can help track progress towards the achievement of the Goals.

Thank you again for your participation in our launch. We look forward to working with you and the entire Commission in achieving this ambitious agenda, and would appreciate an opportunity to work with you at your earliest convenience.