



Workshop “The Global Sustainable Development Report - Science as a leverage point for sustainable development”

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The **Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)** was mandated by the UN member states to accompany the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The newest report, launched in September 2019, provides insights on the state of global sustainable development and defines transformative pathways. Science is identified as a potential lever of sustainable development in the GSDR.

The EU, through the European Commission, is one of the world’s largest funding bodies of science, technology and innovation. Through its framework programmes for research, science and innovation, such as the ongoing Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), almost 80 billion EUR are spent for research activities. For the following framework programme, **Horizon Europe**, over 100 billion EUR are foreseen. In its different work programmes, international cooperation beyond Europe is encouraged. Earlier framework programmes traditionally have included research aimed at societal and environmental benefits.

Given the importance that both the GSDR as well as the European Commission attribute to science for sustainable development, the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik convened a workshop on “Science as a leverage point for sustainable development” in Brussels on October 9, 2019. As part of a mandate to support the GSDR’s dissemination, the event was organized in cooperation with UNDESA, the University of Bern’s Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), the German Environment Agency (UBA), the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the International Science Council (ISC).

The workshop aimed to foster exchange among the international group of scientists responsible for the 2019 GSDR with participants from diverse European and international research institutions, civil society organizations as well as from different Directorate Generals of the European Commission. Taking the GSDR’s chapter on science for sustainable development as a starting point, around 50 participants joined the lively discussions on the role of science, science policy, international cooperation, stakeholder involvement and science-policy-society interfaces for sustainable development in Europe and beyond.

The event opened with a keynote on science and science policy for sustainability from a European perspective. **Kurt Vandenberghe**, Director for Policy Development and Coordination at the EU Commission, Directorate General Research and Innovation, presented how the upcoming EU framework programme, Horizon Europe, aims to foster research and innovation as driver for systemic transition, based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The GSDR and its call for sustainability transformations on different scales are an important reference for designing the new research programme. **Peter Messerli**, Director of CDE and co-chair of the GSDR’s international team of authors, then presented the systemic and holistic approach to sustainable development developed in the 2019 GSDR. Reforms and path-dependent evolutions are no longer viable for the planet and the report thus calls for a fundamental transformation in the way we live, produce and consume. Peter Messerli presented the systemic entry points which the GSDR perceives as essential to achieve a systemic transformation towards sustainability. Next to human well-being and capabilities, the GSDR emphasizes the essential role of sustainable and just economies, food systems and nutrition patterns, energy decarbonization with universal access, urban and peri-urban development as well as the global environmental commons. The report identifies four levers for transformation within each systemic entry point. These include governance, economy and finance, individual

and collective action, and science and technology. The report emphasizes the importance of developing integrated pathways as context-specific approaches – working towards sustainable cities, for instance. From this, the GSDR emphasizes stems a need for scientific research and analytical academic input. Sustainability research is necessary, which emphasizes cross-disciplinary work and committing resources to research in this spirit, particularly in the global South.

Taking the GSDR’s chapter on science for sustainable development as a starting point, participants in the workshop then engaged in dynamic debates. In a first panel, **Heide Hackmann**, CEO of the International Science Council (ISC), **Sven Schade**, coordinator of Research and Innovation at the European Commission's DG Environment, **Jean-Pascal van Ypersele**, professor of Climatology and Sustainable Development at Université Catholique de Louvain and member of the GSDR’s author team, and **Thomas Arnold**, Advisor for the Sustainable Development Goals, European Commission's DG Research and Innovation, provided different perspectives on **science for sustainability and the role of policy**. Subsequently, the participants and panelists split up into smaller groups. In one group, EU-policymakers and scientists exchanged on the difficulties of aligning research and policy time frames and finding the right spots in the policy process to insert scientific knowledge meaningfully into policy. Further groups dealt with different concepts of science. Participants discussed possible tensions between the concept of *science for society* and academic freedom, or the strategic orientation of *Horizon Europe*. While the participants welcomed Horizon Europe’s overall orientation towards the SDGs, they pointed out that trade-offs between aims of economic innovation and sustainable development have to be acknowledged.

The afternoon was dedicated at the topic of **internationalising and diversifying research for sustainability**. The session opened with inputs by **Ione Anderson**, Director, Policy, Partnerships & Communication, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI), **Eeva Furman**, Director of the Environmental Policy Centre at the Finnish Environment Institute and member of the GSDR’s author team, **Robert Burmanjer**, Head of Unit Knowledge, Statistics and Data Hub, European Commission's DG International Cooperation and Development, and **Ingeborg Niestroy**, senior fellow at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies and SDG Watch Europe. Points picked up from the presentations and discussed in smaller rounds between participants and panelists included international research cooperation on sustainability issues, the importance of stakeholder integration in sustainability-oriented research, and the impact of research. Discussions emerged on the creation of meaningful impacts in view of transformation and the current weaknesses of measuring the impact of research beyond the output in publications. Participants agreed that better indicators of transformational impact are necessary. Lively debates also arose on transdisciplinarity as a mode of science adequate for enhancing transformation towards sustainability. In view of internationalization and fair science cooperation with partners from those countries of the Global South which might not have well-resourced scientific institutions, the need of both institutional as well as personal capacity development was highlighted.

In a closing panel, **Eeva Furman**, **Flavia Schlegel**, Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy, ISC, **Shantanu Mukherjee**, Chief of Policy and Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA, and **Anastasios Kentarchos**, Acting Head of Unit Ecological and Social Transitions, European Commission's DG Research and Innovation, discussed what science policy could learn from the GSDR – in Europe and beyond. The conclusions

illustrated the complexity of the issue: The panelists pointed at the importance of aligning objectives of different policy fields for sustainable development; while simultaneously addressing the imbalances in the global science system for more equitable development. Furthermore, it was stressed that research results and findings of the GSDR need to be transferred to and contextualized in national contexts.

The workshop provided a number of avenues for further research and reflections. It has put actors from different European Directorate-Generals and different communities (research, development, foreign relations) into a dialogue that is necessary to maintain and continue for activities in a broader field of sustainability, meant to put a science-policy interface in practice.

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Final Agenda

October 8	
19:00	Welcome Dinner, Hotel Thon, Restaurant ‘The Twelve’
October 9	
9:00	<p>Welcome words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shantanu Mukherjee, Chief of Policy and Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA • Sven Grimm, Head of Research Programme on Inter- and Transnational Cooperation, Training, German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) • Peter Messerli, Director of the Center for Development and Environment (CDE); Co-chair of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS)
9:15	<p>Keynotes <i>Sustainability and European Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kurt Vandenberghe, Director for Policy Development and Coordination at the European Commission’s DG Research and Innovation <p><i>The role of science for sustainability as envisaged in the GSDR</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Messerli, Director of the Center for Development and Environment (CDE); Co-chair of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS)
10:15	<p>Science for sustainability and the role of policy <i>5-8 min input statements by</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heide Hackmann, CEO, International Science Council (ISC) • Sven Schade, Coordinator of Research and Innovation at the European Commission’s DG Environment • Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, Professor of climatology and sustainable development at Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) • Thomas Arnold, Advisor Sustainable Development Goals, European Commission’s DG Research and Innovation
11:00	Coffee break
11:30	<p>Interactive discussion with the panelists in smaller groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to mobilize, harness and disseminate knowledge for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs? • Strengthening the science-policy-society interface: What works, what doesn’t? • How to support mission-oriented research, guided by the 2030 Agenda, in sustainability science and other fields? • How can GSDR results be utilized to shape the upcoming Horizon Europe? • How can policy coherence for sustainability be enhanced?
12:15	Summing up the discussions

12:45	Lunch
13:45	<p>Internationalising and diversifying research for sustainability <i>5-8 min input statements by</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone Anderson, Director, Policy, Partnerships & Communication, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI) • Eeva Furman, Director of the Environmental Policy Centre at the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE); Member of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS) • Robert Burmanjer, Head of Unit Knowledge, Statistics and Data Hub, European Commission's DG International Cooperation and Development • Ingeborg Niestroy, Senior Fellow, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS); Member of Steering Group, SDG Watch Europe
14:30	<p>Interactive discussion with the panelists in smaller groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International dimension of research for sustainable development in EU research programmes – do they facilitate multidirectional (North/South, South/North and South/South) transfers of knowledge for achieving the SDGs? • Transdisciplinary research in EU-programmes - approaches and incentives • How to promote gender equality in science and technology research? • How can research open up towards diverse pathways to sustainability?
15:15	Summing up the discussions
15:45	<p>Closing session: What should/could science policy learn from the GSDR – in Europe and beyond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flavia Schlegel, Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy, International Science Council (ISC) • Shantanu Mukherjee, Chief of Policy and Analysis Branch, Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA • Eeva Furman, Director of the Environmental Policy Centre at the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE); Member of the Independent Group of Scientists (IGS) • Anastasios Kentarchos, Acting Head of Unit Ecological and Social Transitions, European Commission's DG Research and Innovation
16:30	<p>End of official programme <i>Time for networking with coffee and cake</i></p>