

10.02.17**Decision**
of the Bundesrat

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future - European Action for Sustainability
COM(2016) 739 final

In its 953rd session on 10th February 2017 the Bundesrat adopted the following Opinion pursuant to §§ 3 and 5, Act on Cooperation between the Federation and the Federal States in European Union Affairs (EUZBLG):

1. The Bundesrat commends the Commission's commitment in its Communication to comprehensive implementation at the European level, in internal and external policies, of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015, as well as the commitment to make sustainable development a key guiding principle in all Commission policy. In so doing, the Commission is complying with a long-standing engagement laid out in the European Union treaties (Article 3, Sub-section 3, Sentence 2, TEU). In addition, the Bundesrat welcomes the fact that the Communication takes account of the importance of the subsidiarity principle and the delimitation of competences between the EU and the Member States in the context of sustainable development.
2. The Bundesrat is also pleased to note that the Commission envisages regular reporting on EU progress on implementation of Agenda 2030 from 2017 on.

- .3. However, the Bundesrat does not share the Commission's view that the existing governance system within the Commission and the EU as a whole already ensures implementation of the guiding principle of sustainable development and of Agenda 2030. There are at present no adequate procedural provisions in the decision-making system of the Commission or the EU to ensure such implementation.
4. The scale of the challenges facing the EU in addressing sustainable development and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals becomes apparent in the report from the statistical office of the European Union, Eurostat, published at the same time as the Commission Communication in November 2016.
5. The requisite progress can in the Bundesrat's view only be attained if EU policies are consistently oriented to this objective. In order to achieve this, it is in particular necessary to subdivide the Sustainable Development Goals in order to express them in the form of the EU's own ambitious sustainable development goals, which can make a substantial contribution to achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals. In many states around the world and in almost all of the EU Member States, independent systems of sustainable development goals are being developed, or have already been adopted, in order to implement the global Sustainable Development Goals. In January 2017 the Federal Government, with the participation of the federal states, adopted a new federal sustainability strategy articulating specific goals for Germany in relation to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Many of the German federal states have adopted or adjusted their own sustainability strategies or are working on their own goal-based systems to implement the global Sustainable Development Goals. These systems and strategies will need to be continuously adapted to new developments, as will also be the case at the EU level.
6. As EU action plays an important role in many of the relevant policy areas (for example agricultural and environmental policy), a European sustainability framework is crucial to ensure that Europe makes an effective contribution to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That is the only way to ensure that activities at the EU level and activities in the Member States are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

7. The Bundesrat therefore considers that ambitious strategic goals to implement the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 should be stipulated promptly at the EU level and that an indicator system should be adopted. As also advocated in several Opinions from the EU's Committee of the Regions, this process could, for example, take the form of a new EU sustainability strategy or a Europe 2030 strategy, building on the Europe 2020 Strategy. A new strategic approach of this type must also be equipped with an effective implementation mechanism, which was lacking in the EU's previous sustainability strategy from 2001. It is crucial to ensure that a unit in the Commission, endowed with sufficient capacities and influence, is in future entrusted with implementation of sustainable development as a guiding principle and of Agenda 2030 in its full thematic breadth; the Commission's Secretariat-General is of particular importance in this context.
8. Work currently underway on a new European consensus on development policy on the basis of the Commission Communication of 22nd November 2016 (COM(2016) 740 final) shows that discussions on the consequences of Agenda 2030 and its implementation at EU level currently continue to think solely in terms of specific policy areas, as well as revealing a lack of clearly formulated strategic goals and indicators.
9. Furthermore, the Bundesrat considers that the Commission should initiate an interinstitutional consultation process promptly, with the participation of the Member States, as well as the EU's regions and federal states, in order to devise the requisite overall strategic framework for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at EU level in a timely manner. The EU's Economic and Social Committee has already undertaken important initial consultation measures to this end.

10. This consultation and decision-making process should also be linked to the reflections on the future of the European Union initiated after the United Kingdom's referendum on EU membership. A new 2030 strategic vision for the EU also seems important to consolidate EU citizens' confidence in the EU's future. The 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which the EU will be celebrating in March of this year, offers a good opportunity to develop such a new vision for the EU.

11. The Bundesrat shall transmit this Opinion directly to the Commission and the European Parliament.