

ESDN Blog:

Sustainable development has to be part of restoring our world after COVID-19

By Anneleen Malesevic, Head of communication of the Federal Institute of Sustainable Development (FSID) and member of the organizing committee of the SDG Forum

Humanitarian crises make great incubators for far-reaching structural change. The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath reinforces the need to mainstream long-term solutions for a resilient society and economy that works for all. COVID-19 has laid bare a lack of resilience to global risks. Recovery plans that aim to protect health, incomes and businesses need to look at the flaws in their social and economic systems pre-COVID and tackle them to ensure greater resilience for other environmental and social crises ahead. UN chief Antonio Guterres has urged governments, public institutions and businesses to use their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic to tackle the unfolding sustainability crisis. Recovery plans should not support environmentally or socially harmful activities that can worsen the current and future crises. Building highly polluting infrastructure or promoting activities that do not contribute to social wellbeing now will have an impact on the decades to come. That is why [the SDG Forum](#) strongly believes we cannot put discussions and networking on sustainable development on hold.

As the first multi-stakeholder forum on the SDGs in the Benelux, the SDG Forum strives to connect unusual suspects. Organized by 18 partner organizations from every corner of the sustainable development sector, the SDG forum gives policy makers, business, NGO's, academia and union representatives a chance to meet and exchange SDG ideas and SDG solutions.

With our digital conference platform Hopin, the SDG Forum brings you almost 30 workshops, plenary sessions and a keynote from Jeffrey Sachs. The topics on the table are SDGs and Education, SDGs and Finance, SDGs in Business, SDGs in recovery of COVID-19, SDGs and local government, SDG and policy guidelines, and many more.

The SDG forum also looks into the progress the SDGs have made so far in the business world. It has been 5 years since the SDGs were first introduced by the UN in 2015. The second SDG Barometer, by Antwerp Management School, the University of Antwerp, UCLouvain and the FISD, maps out the implementation of the SDGs within Belgian organizations. This follow up study shows that the SDGs are taken into account in the business world. More and more businesses are anchoring the SDGs into their activities regardless of their size, shape or status. During the last 5 years, there have been pioneers, who have demonstrated that economic profitability, social development, respect for human rights and the environment is not at all an odd combination to make. These pioneers paved the way for many others to follow.

Nonetheless, challenges remain and they are often great and complex. It is not an easy road to create transparency in the supply chain, respect for human rights in a globalized economy, dignified wages for all, preservation of natural resources, protection of biodiversity and fight against climate change. Nevertheless, facing these challenges also means economic opportunity, innovation and sustainability for business and progress for our society as a whole. Events such as the SDG Forum are incubators to connect people who will help face these challenges.

For more information about the program, check www.sdgforum.be.

Anneleen Malesevic

Head of communication of the Federal Institute of Sustainable Development (FSID) and member of the organizing committee of the SDG Forum

