



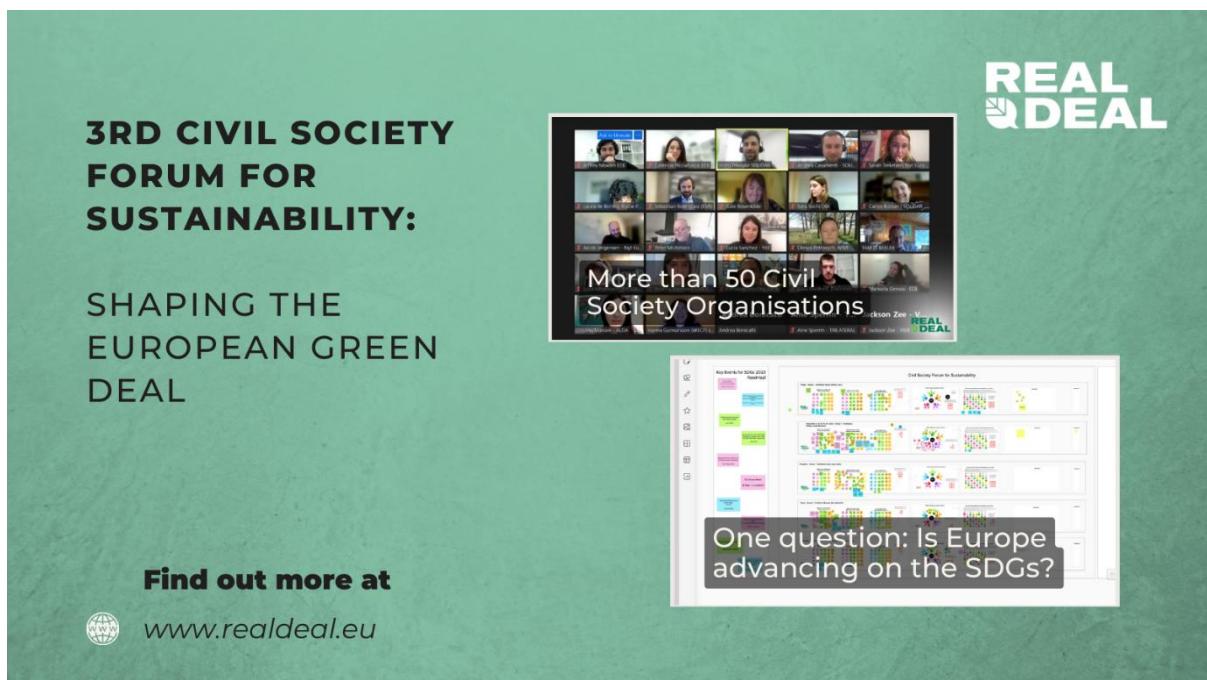
3rd Civil Society Forum for Sustainability

Assessing SDG progress

Date: 25 - 26 January 2023

(Online)

As the EU prepares a mid-term Review of the SDGs, CSOs from across Europe met to discuss trends and assess progress at the REAL DEAL Project's Civil Society Forum.



More than 50 civil society organisations from across Europe gathered online for the third edition of the "Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal" on 25 and 26 January 2023, for two half-days of lively debate and discussion.

Organised by the REAL DEAL project, the Civil Society Forum is a space for CSOs and other stakeholders from across Europe to come together and exchange views on the European Green Deal (EGD), the EU's strategy to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. The forum is co-organised by [**SDG Watch Europe**](#), [**SOLIDAR**](#), and the [**European Environmental Bureau \(EEB\)**](#), alongside REAL DEAL project partners.

Focused on assessing the gaps and opportunities in implementing an ambitious EGD and 2030 Agenda, the third edition of the forum saw representatives of civil society organisations come together to deliberate on the topic of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the **European Voluntary Review**.

Serving as a Europe-wide Voluntary National Review, the EU Voluntary Review is an **opportunity for the EU to monitor its global progress on the SDGs** by producing a detailed review report, foreseen for April 2023 and led by the European Commission, ahead of the 2023 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July and the SDG Summit, scheduled for September 2023.

During the forum, a line-up of prominent speakers shared their experiences with forum members and interactive discussions took place in smaller working groups on different SDG themes. Through these exchanges, the Forum aims to develop civil society recommendations in the form of a civil society spotlight report, that can contribute to ensuring strong and meaningful participation in SDG monitoring and future Green Deal policymaking, as the EU embarks on a green and just transition.



The first speaker, **Mogens Lykketoft**, Danish politician and Former President of UNGA, suggested the strong implementation of the SDGs would not be successful without good cooperation with civil society.

Lucija Karnelutti, Youth Delegate to the United Nations, took the floor and explained her official mandate to ensure that the youth perspective is covered within UN policies. "Young people will be most impacted by the success or the failure of the 2030 Agenda", she noted.



Last but not least, **Guillaume Lafortune**, from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), shared key messages from the recent Europe Sustainable Development Report 2022. Despite progress in some areas, "the SDGs are not being achieved", he warned.

The EU Voluntary Review – a chance to turn things around?

Despite pressure from civil society organisations, the EU has so far failed to ensure a transparent and participatory process for its SDG stocktaking exercise, and citizens and civil society have been side-lined in its drafting and production.

The EU must ensure it does not fall behind the well-established practices at the High-Level Political Forum which involve civil society and allow for a critical reflection of European sustainability policies. Without strong participation and public scrutiny, the review risks becoming a weak and politically meaningless document, and in worst case an exercise in 'SDG washing'. An overarching strategy for the SDGs and adequate financing mechanisms are essential, alongside structured dialogue with civil society. So far, calls for such a strategy have been met with meek interest inside the institutions.

The EU Voluntary Review (EU VR) must be an honest, inclusive, and forward looking stocktaking of where Europe and its relationship and impact on the rest of the world stands on SDG Implementation, and a constructive assessment of how much remains to be done for Europe to meet its sustainability commitments under the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the European Green Deal.