

## **Stakeholder participation**

Contributions of German stakeholders  
to Germany's third Voluntary National  
Review for the HLPF 2025

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**Progress and developments:  
the 2030 Agenda in German sustainability policy since 2021**

## Germany needs to continue to strengthen policy coherence and avoid spillovers

By establishing areas of transformation and Transformation Teams to implement its Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), the German government has taken an important step to improve policy coherence for sustainable development. This approach to policy-making across federal ministries in the six areas of transformation has strengthened the international dimension of sustainable development, and it has strengthened the development perspective. In our view, the new German government should demonstrate continuity in this regard and continue to pursue and expand these and/or additional areas of transformation, and strengthen the work of the Transformation Teams. The new German government should once again highlight the international dimension of sustainable development across all areas of transformation.

We welcome the fact that the German government is now addressing negative spillovers in all areas of transformation. Negative spillovers are, for example, human rights violations at supplier companies along the supply chain and harmful greenhouse gas emissions from German industrial enterprises. What is lacking with regard to the areas of transformation, however, is a systematic analysis of spillover effects and how to avoid them. The SDS only mentions examples of spillovers and measures to address them. Overall, it is hard to discern any coherent strategies in the SDS to prevent negative spillovers. Moreover, spillover effects not sufficiently reflected in the indicators. The German government also fails to differentiate between effects at the national, regional and local levels, which is necessary as the spillovers can have different impacts depending on the level.

The German government should

- integrate in its SDS a systematic analysis of the impacts of Germany's actions in the areas of transformation across national borders, and its impacts on global public goods;
- take account, as statistical capacity is built, of the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind. This means that suitable gender-transformative indicators are needed to record the specific impacts on persons affected by multiple discrimination. These are indicators that visualise change towards gender equality. Characteristics such as age and disability must also be taken into account. This facilitates appropriate measuring of implementation progress and needs and makes it possible to provide the right information on spillover effects regarding the international (social) dimension – concerning areas such as gender equality, climate change, the food situation, health and human rights in the Global South, and global goods.

## | Germany – a reliable partner for international cooperation

### Financing for sustainable development: Germany needs to accept its international responsibility and take action on the basis of solidarity

Global social inequality continues to deepen – and with it, human suffering. In order to effectively reduce hunger and poverty and ensure that investments are made in health, education, climate action and gender equality, at least 4 trillion US dollars needs to be mobilised every year. To make this funding available, comprehensive reforms must be made to the international financial system, and the countries of the Global North must exercise greater solidarity. Many countries in the Global South are now spending more than 15 per cent of their government revenue on servicing debt to private and institutional creditors. At the same time, their options for increasing tax revenue are limited. They urgently need more support to fight tax evasion and corruption. There is also a lack of international agreements that would help them to take more effective action against tax avoidance and harmful tax competition. Multinational corporations and the ultra-wealthy are avoiding tax or have to pay much lower tax rates than average income earners. Simultaneously, the countries of the Global North, faced with economic challenges of their own and shifting political priorities, are massively cutting funding for Official Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian assistance. The German government alone has cut this funding by more than 50 per cent. The German government needs to accept its international responsibility and act accordingly.

The German government should therefore

- support a fair and transparent multilateral debt relief mechanism that includes all countries and lays down legally binding regulations for the entire debt cycle. Legal obligations should be created for private creditors to take part in debt restructuring;
- advance the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation so that it will deliver redistributive and gender-transformative impacts. The German government should also support the wealth tax for the super-rich demanded by the G20, and an internationally harmonised overall corporate tax rate for multinational corporations;
- increase German funding for international climate finance, from 2025, by an annual minimum of eight to ten billion euros over and above existing development funding. These resources should benefit, above all, the most vulnerable population groups, so that Germany will contribute its fair share to achieving the new global collective climate finance goal of 300 billion US dollars by 2035;
- meet its commitment of keeping official development assistance at a level of at least 0.7 per cent of gross national income (ODA ratio) and providing at least 0.2 per cent of gross national income for the least developed countries (LDCs).

## | *Lessons learned for current and future fields of action*

### **Making economic activities sustainable and protecting human rights**

Worldwide, more than 32,000 children are digging deep underground for mica, a mineral. People who are making clothing for us are working for starvation wages. A European company is engaged in a huge oil project that threatens the lives of millions of humans and animals in East Africa. All over the world, humans and the natural environment are suffering along the supply chains of German and European companies.

By embracing the 2030 Agenda, Germany has committed itself to a sustainable transformation of the economy and the protection of human rights along global value chains. Germany's due diligence act is an important step in the right direction. That makes it all the harder to understand why the current German government has announced that the scope of the act will be reduced to cover just one third of the companies concerned. Such a step would not only undermine the provisions of the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), it would also hamper its effective implementation.

At the level of the United Nations, the German government finally must push for the conclusion of a legally binding instrument on business and human rights (UN Binding Treaty). It is vital that the legal obligations on corporate due diligence in supply chains with a view to decent work and environmental protection in the Global South be enforced systematically through the Sustainable Development Strategy. On no account must they be undermined through economic policy measures to foster growth and competitiveness.

We therefore recommend that the German government

- support the negotiations on the UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights by actively working for an ambitious EU negotiating mandate;
- transpose the EU CSDDD into national law in a timely and ambitious manner, avoiding any lowering of the national level of protection for human rights and the environment. Until the European regulations begin to be applied, the German Act on Corporate Due Diligence in Supply Chains remains fully in force.



## | *Lessons learned for current and future fields of action*

### Strengthening civil society worldwide

Worldwide, civil society organisations and activists are working to make societies more sustainable, democratic and just. They are promoting women's and LGBTQIA+ rights, fighting environmental degradation and human rights violations, and supporting marginalised and vulnerable groups. Through their committed efforts for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind, they are making an essential contribution to global development. In more and more countries, however, governments are hampering their independent work through restrictive legislation, bureaucratic requirements and restrictions on funding. Vilification and harassment, surveillance and censorship in the digital sphere are restricting the rights to freedom of opinion and to privacy. This is particularly affecting women, LGBTQIA+ persons and other marginalised groups, who are often already suffering from intersectional discrimination. The closing civic space is an expression of a global crisis of democracy, with governments turning away from practising democratic values, and autocratic systems becoming stronger. Ultimately, this development is leading to an increase in inequalities and to economic development becoming less sustainable. We therefore welcome the fact that the German government is involving Germany's civil society closely in implementing the Sustainable Development Strategy. A large number of civil society stakeholders are able to play a part in shaping the Sustainable Development Strategy through the Dialogue Group, the dialogue conferences and online participation mechanisms. This participation must be upheld and increased. We therefore recommend that the German government

- work globally to ensure that democratic civil society organisations and activists are strengthened and protected and enjoy participation. It should provide financial and capacity development support so they can make their concerns heard in local, national and international bodies. The German government's actions need to be guided by the goal of strengthening democratic civil society. It needs to speak out strongly against the repression of civil society;
- strengthen the successful participation mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda and the German Sustainable Development Strategy so that civil society representatives enjoy systematic, regular and early participation in political decision-making processes that have impacts on sustainable development and human rights worldwide. In these mechanisms, the German government should ensure that stakeholder groups and structurally disadvantaged groups are represented on a broad basis;
- communicate how it is supporting civil society stakeholders in the Global South, especially persons affected by marginalisation and structural disadvantages, and their organisations. The German government should also communicate how it is organising the participation of those who are working for sustainable development and involving them in the further development and implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

| **Statement for the future****Targeted efforts to advance the global transformation**

In view of advancing climate change, growing social inequality and the many violent conflicts, the world is facing fundamental challenges. They require a comprehensive and coordinated transformation at the global, national and local levels. Ten years after the international community reached agreement on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework, the goals of these agreements have still not been reached. The transformation processes launched through these agendas are enormous. They relate to economic, social and ecological systems and require humanity to rethink nearly all areas of life and work. So far, the international community has not yet been willing to launch the necessary reforms with the requisite ambition and financial backing and implement them systematically. These reforms require courage and determination, as established systems need to be reconsidered, and adapted in the face of broad opposition. This can only succeed in a joint effort based on solidarity, and it must finally be advanced systematically in the remaining just under six years and beyond. As a prosperous, influential country, Germany can make a big difference by pursuing the right measures. We recommend that the German government

- take determined action at the German, European and international levels to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its further development, while strengthening development policy and humanitarian assistance as key policy fields;
- meet the global climate goals and provide comprehensive technological and financial support for the energy transition and for countries and population groups affected by energy poverty, with a view to achieving a just transition;
- work for far-reaching reforms to the international financial architecture in order to ensure more equitable financing. This is intended to provide scope for funding education, health, gender equality and social protection and the equal representation of countries of the Global South;
- advocate worldwide for legally binding regulations and long-term financing for the realisation of human rights and gender equality. This includes enforcing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls and LGBTQIA+ persons and swiftly ending harmful cultural practices;
- further develop the German Sustainable Development Strategy, turning it into a transformation framework for the accelerated implementation of the SDGs. This framework must create more policy coherence through sustainability-oriented, holistic and feminist policy approaches and interministerial cooperation. Moreover, negative spillovers of German policies and economic activity must be avoided and SDG-related data collection must be established in line with the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind. This should also include data regarding the cross-border impacts that German policies have on the social dimension of sustainable development and on global goods;
- ensure the comprehensive participation of civil society – especially the organisations of marginalised and vulnerable population groups – in the realisation of the SDGs, both in Germany and in Germany's partner countries. Targeted support must be given to civil society at all political and civil society levels in order to make the transformation more equitable.

## German Nursing Council (Deutscher Pflegerat e.V. – DPR)

### | How Germany strengthens public and global health

## A strong nursing profession as a guide to sustainability: the contribution of the German Nursing Council

### Nursing and sustainability in the 2030 Agenda

The German Nursing Council (Deutscher Pflegerat e.V. – DPR) is actively contributing its nursing expertise to the further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS). The focus is on how the healthcare system can contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Against the backdrop of demographic change and global crises, sustainability in Germany must be considered comprehensively and the care perspective must be integrated into all strategic dimensions.

### Healthcare as a central infrastructure

A sustainable healthcare system that provides all population groups with access to high-quality healthcare is essential. In this context, the DPR emphasises the need to strengthen the nursing profession as a critical infrastructure. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic show that resilience and crisis resilience must be key priorities. The DPR is paying particular attention to long-term care at home, which is where the majority of people with care needs are provided with care. Innovative local care concepts and long-term investment in the autonomy of the care profession are essential here.

### Strengthening the healthcare and nursing professions

Professional carers are the backbone of a functioning healthcare system. The DPR is committed to better working conditions, the new legislation governing nursing practice and advanced nursing practice (Scope of nursing practice), safe staffing ratios as well as targeted further training for professional carers. The reform of the legal framework is essential in order to significantly improve interprofessional cooperation.

***Good Practice:** The establishment of academically trained carers such as community health nurses can ensure and improve healthcare provision for the population in rural, structurally weak and urban areas. As an interface between prevention and care, they can make a decisive contribution. A few community health nurses are already working in communities and health centres in the federal states (Länder) of Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Hamburg and Bavaria, for example.*

### Sustainable education and global health

Education is the key to sustainable healthcare. The DPR is committed to ensuring that the concepts of “planetary health” and “disaster nursing” are integrated into the curricula of nursing training and nursing studies. This must be anchored in all phases of nursing training in order to prepare nurses for future challenges and establish them as drivers of change.

***Good Practice:** Projects such as “Green Guide for Nursing (GG-Nurse)”, “Practice instructors in nursing and healthcare professions as key persons for vocational training for sustainable development (BBNE-PfleGe)”, “Sustainable action in nursing education: curricular integration of planetary health and digital competence (Naht)”, inter-professional “S1” Guideline “Sustainability in intensive and emergency medicine” and “Heat protection in nursing education – teaching and learning materials for school and practice (HiP)” are developing or already offer practice-oriented approaches that promote sustainable action in nursing practice.*

### **Prevention and health promotion**

Nursing professionals play a central role in prevention. The DPR advocates a stronger legal basis and prioritisation of prevention measures. The aim is to sustainably strengthen the health literacy of the population and to establish preventative measures.

*Good Practice: Increased training and further involvement of academically trained nursing professionals such as community health nurses in prevention and health promotion can help to identify and avoid illnesses and health problems at an early stage.*

### **Political participation**

The transformation to a sustainable society requires the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders. The DPR is committed to ensuring that the largest professional group in the healthcare sector is involved more strongly and sustainably in political processes in order to establish internationally exemplary standards in Germany. Health and well-being must be consistently promoted as central elements of sustainable development.

The DPR emphasises the central role of the nursing profession in a sustainable society. By setting clear priorities and systematically incorporating the perspective of professional carers, the German Sustainable Development Strategy can make a decisive contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Berlin, 6 February 2025

## SDSN Germany, Global Policy Forum &amp; VENRO e.V.

***How Germany facilitates international peer learning and Responsibility for spillover effects*****Spillover effects and peer learning**

Negative spillover effects represent a key challenge in implementing the 2030 Agenda in, with and by Germany. Given the increasing geopoliticisation of international sustainability policy and the growing power of low- and middle-income countries, Germany would be well advised in its cooperation policy to address the adverse effects of its own consumption and production patterns transparently and proactively. Addressing spillover effects along the transformation areas and levers of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) is a sensible first step. However, specific indicators, including the necessary resources for the Federal Statistical Office, are required for concrete implementation and tracking. An analysis of spillover effects in Germany ([Fuller & Bermont-Diaz, 2024](#)) recommends, for example, developing indicators for imported deforestation and cases of forced labour in supply chains. The indicators must be linked to corresponding evidence-based measures to help reduce negative spillover effects. Various dimensions should be considered, such as the effects of security and financial policy, in addition to socio-ecological effects. Like Finland's 2020 VNR and the 2023 VNRs of France and Iceland, the German 2025 VNR could also address spillover effects in a separate section.

Inclusive, hybrid participation and peer learning formats with national and international stakeholders from academia, politics, society and business would be important to promote international cooperation to reduce negative spillover effects and take into account the heterogeneous perspectives of the stakeholders and countries affected by spillover effects throughout the design of corresponding measures ([SDSN Germany, 2024](#) (in German); [Berger et al., 2024](#)). The German government has set up numerous participation and implementation formats for the GSDS (e.g. dialogue events, Joint Action for Sustainable Development (*Gemeinschaftswerk Nachhaltigkeit*) platform), and individual ministries are making great efforts to facilitate critical reflection and learning. However, voices from academia, civil society and business have been calling for more effective communication and more representative participation processes. It would be particularly expedient to incorporate the knowledge of stakeholders from countries that are affected by Germany's negative spillover effects. Diversity could be further strengthened by increasing the involvement of actors from grassroots movements, the cultural and creative industries and traditional import- and export-oriented economic sectors, in addition to international stakeholders. Participation processes should be characterised by openness and a willingness to experiment, present more concrete problems and objectives and take into account the capacities of societal actors (and enable financial support where necessary). It would be helpful to receive feedback on the recommendations that emerge from participation processes, and also feedback regarding implementation and/or reservations and obstacles in relation to implementation. This could promote mutual learning.

**CorA corporate accountability network, Initiative Lieferkettengesetz – supply chain act initiative, Treaty Alliance Germany, VENRO e.V.**

**Germany assumes responsibility for spillover effects**

## **Mandatory rules for businesses concerning human rights and sustainability – a fundamental prerequisite for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda**

Numerous civil society groups and organisations in Germany are working for a world in which economic activity serves the wellbeing of the people and in which the social-ecological transformation towards sustainability and global justice is the vision that guides all players' actions. These groups and organisations are calling for governments to systematically protect human rights, the environment and the global climate in the context of global economic activity, and to introduce systematic regulations to govern the actions of enterprises in line with international conventions.<sup>1</sup> Enterprises which cause, or play a part in causing, human rights violations or damage to the environment must be held accountable, and victims of human rights or environmental harm must receive justice. Governments must create a binding legal basis for this and enforce it effectively along global value chains. This is also a fundamental prerequisite for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

As early as in 2006, more than 60 organisations from the fields of human rights, development, environmental protection and consumer protection, and trade unions formed the [CorA \(Corporate Accountability\) network](#) (Website only available in German). In 2019, the [Initiative Lieferkettengesetz](#) (Initiative for a due diligence act) was established, a civil society alliance comprising over 130 organisations. It has been working for more effective corporate due diligence legislation in Germany and the EU.

The alliance considers the **German Act on Corporate Due Diligence in Supply Chains**, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, a huge step forward, even though the Act has a number of serious weaknesses: the number of companies covered is too small; the Act does not apply to the downstream supply chain – in other words, the core business – of the finance and arms industries; it contains too many exceptions with regard to the due diligence obligations; it fails to give victims a claim to compensation; and it contains no effective measures for climate action along supply chains.<sup>2</sup> The Act also [needs to be improved](#) [Article only available in German] with regard to its provisions concerning the promotion of gender equality.

The **EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)**, which entered into force on 25 July 2024, has brought progress on a number of points. In particular, it goes beyond current German legislation when it comes to civil liability. If a human rights violation has clearly been caused by a business, victims will have the option in future to file lawsuits for compensation before EU courts. Moreover, the range of protected rights for which compliance is required has been broadened. Among other things, it now includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – which means that the specific rights of children now must be protected as part of a company's due diligence obligations. The German government will have to tighten its due diligence act accordingly. On other

<sup>1</sup> See, in particular, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/core-international-human-rights-instruments-and-their-monitoring-bodies> and <https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards/conventions-protocols-and-recommendations>.

<sup>2</sup> An analysis of the Act published by Initiative Lieferkettengesetz is available in [German](#) and [English](#).

points, the CSDDD is less ambitious than Germany's act. However, it only covers companies with more than 1,000 staff members and an annual turnover of more than 450 million euros – the latter threshold is not part of Germany's legislation.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the core business of financial undertakings is explicitly excluded from the Directive's coverage.

Civil society alliances are expecting the German government and parliament to transpose the CSDDD into German law in a timely and ambitious manner, in line with European law, in such a way that the protection level established by the German act will not be weakened.<sup>4</sup> The goal of the transposition must be to create a high level of protection for human rights, the global climate and the environment. With this goal in mind, the alliances are very concerned about the attempts of some political players in Germany and the EU to postpone, weaken or revise regulations that are already in place or have already been adopted. This would deal a blow to human rights and sustainability.

Civil society alliances are also expecting Germany's government and parliament to make sure that Germany will now actively support the **process for a binding UN Treaty** on Business and Human Rights in the international arena. Germany should contribute its own input to the negotiations, so that an ambitious Treaty can be achieved that is in line with international human rights standards and goes beyond the German due diligence act and the CSDDD.<sup>5</sup>

A globally binding Treaty must provide safe and easy access to legal remedy for victims, include far-reaching climate and environmental standards, and cover all enterprises, including the financial and insurance industry. The German government should be advocating, in particular, for a strong role for children's rights and gender equality and also for health criteria such as protection from hazardous chemicals along the entire supply chain. The German government should also work towards strengthening the financial basis for the UN Treaty process and should support regulations that strictly limit the influence of private sector lobbyists on the negotiations. Within the EU, Germany should move the UN Treaty process forward in a constructive manner, and work towards a comprehensive and participatory EU negotiating mandate.

#### Signed by:

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Treaty Alliance Germany  
(<https://www.cora-netz.de/themen/un-treaty/treaty-alliance>)

VENRO – Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations  
(<https://venro.org>)

<sup>3</sup> A short analysis of the CSDDD provided by Initiative Lieferkettengesetz can be found [here](#) (in German).

<sup>4</sup> A [legal opinion published by Germanwatch and Oxfam](#) concludes that the level of protection already existing in a given country must not be reduced through the implementation of the CSDDD. In other words, the level of protection established in Germany through its national due diligence act must not be weakened by the EU CSDDD. It would be a violation of European law, for example, if the Directive were to be cited as a reason to reduce the number of enterprises covered by the German act.

<sup>5</sup> Statements by Treaty Alliance Germany can be found [here](#) (most material in German).



**German NGO Forum on Environment and Development,  
German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO),  
GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice,  
Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) Germany**

***National Circular Economy Strategy and  
Germany assumes responsibility for spillover effects***

## **Ensuring rights-based participation in German development cooperation**

Participation is a basic tenet of human rights. The German government, as a duty bearer for the observation of human rights, must also ensure participation in its development cooperation. This means shaping policies and strategies with and not just for rights holders. Whether it is a matter of protecting the environment and nature, reducing hunger and poverty, or creating decent work: identifying and including rights holders like Indigenous Peoples, small farmers or factory workers is both a key basis and a challenge when it comes to making headway on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The rights of women, elderly people and other discriminated groups are also to be strengthened. The partner approach, which dominates in German and in international development cooperation, is often not sufficient to ensure mutual learning and the participation of rights holders. Because of that, the German government needs to draw up a strategy for international cooperation, setting out how it identifies rights holders and how it secures their effective participation.

The German Institute for Human Rights could provide advisory support in this regard. The UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is also regularly cited as a positive example in multilateral cooperation. This is because it is a forum where those most threatened and affected by hunger can participate in policy processes as self-organised groups. Systematic application in German development cooperation of the policy recommendations made by the CFS is needed. Deepening the feminist approach in foreign and development policy

also contributes to this, along with the implementation of guidelines and strategies developed for this purpose, and efforts to strengthen local human rights groups. Feminist foreign policy worldwide builds on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (Resolution 1325 and follow-up resolutions). Women and marginalised groups experience wars and conflicts in a different way because of the roles assigned to them by society and can contribute to peace processes in a different way. Feminist foreign policy thus places people at the centre of political decision-making.

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## **| National Circular Economy Strategy**

### **Precautionary pause in deep sea mining negotiations and national circular economy strategy**

Germany has an important role in the negotiations on mining regulations for possible deep sea mining at the International Deep Sea Mining Authority. By instigating a precautionary pause, the German government has, thankfully, arrived at an agreement to prevent the immediate start of commercial deep sea mining, and has ruled out the awarding of licences for extraction until further notice. In doing so, Germany was one of the first industrialised countries – now numbering 32 altogether – to lobby for a pause, moratorium or ban. However, the German position does not go far enough. In order to protect the already endangered ocean ecosystem against irreversible and unforeseeable consequences and respect the rights of people affected in the long term by deep sea mining, the German government will need to lobby at the national, European and global levels for the extraction of deep sea raw materials to be prevented. The transition to a circular economy with a reduction in absolute primary consumption of raw materials, ambitious reuse targets, improved recycling and sustainable product design makes deep sea mineral resources superfluous. With the national circular economy strategy, the German government has embarked on the path of conserving resources. These plans for conserving resources now need to be speedily implemented. However, in order to make the plans more binding, there needs to be a resource protection law with binding stipulations for measurable targets, reduction paths, monitoring, sanctions and mandatory reporting.

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## **| How Germany implements international environmental agreements**

### **Giving pollution crises more political relevance, using the example of plastics and chemicals**

In recent years, Germany has made some landmark political decisions in its climate and energy policies. They include, for example, closing down the last nuclear reactor in 2023, which was the final step in phasing out atomic power. Germany's and the EU's exit from the Energy Charter Agreement in 2024 is also an important achievement. With this step, the Federal Republic of Germany has left the biggest and most dangerous investment protection agreement in the world – explicitly because it makes necessary climate protection measures more difficult. Furthermore, Germany played an important role in the EU's exit from the agreement as well. At the same time, however, Germany has agreed to new EU free trade agreements that contradict its position regarding the Energy Charter Agreement, like excluding fossil investments from the investment protection. Despite all the conflicts and necessary tightening, among other things, of the right measures, a sustainable energy policy and tackling the climate crisis remain high on the political agenda.

Loss of biodiversity and the pollution of the planet are not discussed and politically addressed to anything like the same extent. The economic need to justify more growth because of a supposed recession is the main reason offered for this focus. However, the crises are tied together; they are mutually reinforcing; and they endanger our prosperity. A solution or a turnaround on environmental policy must keep the planetary triple crisis in mind in all areas. Social aspects must also be given more consideration in all deliberations, and more specific attention must be given to the diverse impacts of the crises on different population groups and stakeholders.

Take plastics and chemicals, for example: up to 16,000 chemicals are present in plastics worldwide. A quarter of these chemicals are known to be harmful for people and the environment; nothing is known about the potential harm of more than 10,000 chemicals. Chemicals migrate from the plastic and enter into human bodies and into the environment, they accumulate in food chains and pollute ecosystems. At the same time, because plastic is a fossil-based product, its production and use are responsible for a considerable share of greenhouse gas emissions. By 2050, it is likely that the production and use of plastics will consume 13% of our remaining carbon budget in a 1.5°C scenario. Besides reducing the production and use of plastics, the German government needs to campaign for a ban on using chemicals in plastics that are harmful to health and to the environment, especially those that are persistent pollutants (e.g. PFAS) or that impact on the hormonal system of humans and animals (EDCs). What is more, Germany must campaign at the European, national and international levels for export bans, strict regulation and a ban on harmful chemicals. That is also a goal in the Global Framework on Chemicals, which Germany is ambitiously supporting. Yet chemicals which are banned in Germany because of their dangerous properties continue to be exported to countries with lower standards and less regulation.

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## Anchoring the 2030 Agenda: Specific features of the sustainability governance in Germany

### Interministerial cooperation for sustainable transformation

In the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), Germany has committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda through a whole-of-government approach ([Federal Government, 2022](#)), which requires effective interministerial cooperation for accelerated, integrative implementation. Against this backdrop, [Transformation Teams](#) (TTs; web page only available in German) were set up in a pilot project (end of 2022 to mid-2024) in autumn 2022 on the basis of the [Policy Decision on the German Sustainable Development Strategy](#). These interministerial project working groups were entrusted with the task of identifying key opportunities and obstacles for accelerated transformation in the core transformation areas of the Strategy and compiling them in [transformation reports](#) (Federal Government, 2024; only available in German), which then served as discussion and draft decision documents for the [State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development](#) (web page only available in German) and for the Federal Cabinet.

As part of its accompanying research, wpm2030 conducted an ex-post evaluation using a combination of document analyses and qualitative interviews with ministerial representatives involved in the TTs in order to systematically examine the functioning and effectiveness of interministerial cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda using the example of the TTs. The interviews show that cooperation in the TTs has contributed to *networking* among the *ministerial representatives* involved and, thus, to the *visibility of the 2030 Agenda* even in ministries that were not primarily concerned with implementing the sustainability agenda. In addition to these effects, which the majority of participants *rated as positive*, numerous obstacles were also identified. Issues that were emphasised included *insufficient resources* for the TTs and the fact

that the effort had not sufficiently been *integrated, on a long-term basis, in the relevant institutions*, so that the Teams' work did not result in sufficient *direct and/or demonstrable impacts*.

Based on its experience with the TTs, the German government should consider the following success factors, among others, for successful interministerial cooperation to implement the 2030 Agenda in, with and by Germany when implementing its new Sustainable Development Strategy:

- Process moderation and facilitation, so that ministerial silos are overcome and coordination processes are supported
- Firmly establishing the effort (on a long-term basis) in the institutions of Germany's sustainability architecture and within the German government and parliament, so that the results become more visible and more effective for accelerated implementation

The HLPF side event hosted by wpm2030, Cepei and SDSN Germany on 15 July 2024 showed that there is broad international interest in initiatives for interministerial cooperation on SDG implementation. In future, the German government should increasingly engage in exchange on initiatives for interministerial cooperation, for example within the framework of [VNR Labs](#), in order to utilise synergies and drive forward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## wpm2030 &amp; SDSN Germany

| *Transformation in action*

## The Advisory Councils' Dialogue as an innovative format at the science-policy interface for implementing the German Sustainable Development Strategy

Germany implements its national sustainability strategy following a whole-of-government approach ([Bundestag, 2023](#)). This is also reflected in the design of the science-policy interface: in 2018, the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpm2030) and SDSN Germany initiated the “[Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards](#)”. This dialogue – for the first time in Germany on such a broad scale – brings together representatives from an average of 20 advisory councils to the federal ministries twice a year to discuss current sustainability-related issues. For example, in 2021 the transferability of the Federal Constitutional Court's decision on climate protection to future economic and social policy challenges was discussed. Unlike regional and supraregional platforms (such as the “[European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network](#)” (EESDAC) or the “[Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies](#)”), the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards is aimed at *all* interested national scientific advisory bodies of *all* federal ministries.

The [2023 SDG progress report](#) recommends integrating the scientific community more comprehensively. Among other things, this should help with identifying integrated policies and measures to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. The [second German Voluntary National Review](#) also noted as a “lesson learned” the need to better incorporate the expertise of non-governmental actors into future reporting. Therefore, in December 2024, the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards participated with a dedicated session in the much broader consultation process for the third national review.

However, consensus within the scientific community on the benefits of a more integrative approach does not replace the necessary democratic negotiation processes regarding the associated goal conflicts. Integrated science-policy formats, such as the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards, can foster the broad engagement of science and academia with the 2030 Agenda and its visibility, and can support national political negotiation processes by providing well-founded scientific insights. The co-chairs of SDSN Germany and the wpm2030 flag the challenges that must be overcome in this context: growing populism and anti-science sentiment, particularly in the context of a polarized election campaign, make it more difficult to ensure that scientific advice is widely heard. The scientific community must succeed in formulating more concrete and compelling policy recommendations. Accordingly, in 2025, the [International Science Council](#) will once again prioritize the topic of “[Synthesizing and translating scientific knowledge to inform decision-making](#)”.

We recommend addressing the science-related aspect of this year's HLPF theme (“science- and evidence-based solutions”) in the presentation of the national review and incorporating our experiences with integrated science-policy formats into peer-learning exchanges with other governments, their advisory bodies and scientific organizations.

| *Close cooperation with the scientific community*

## Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards 2024 II: Transformation in, with and by Germany Insights for Germany's Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2025

### BRIEF REPORT FROM THE DIALOGUE OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARDS ON 9 DECEMBER 2024

#### Background

The [2023 SDG progress report](#) recommends the more comprehensive integration of science and academia. Among other things, this should help identify integrated policies and measures that can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. The [second German Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#) also identified as a “lesson learned” the need to better integrate the expertise of non-state actors into future reporting processes. Therefore, in December 2025, the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards was involved in a specific session as part of the much broader consultation process for the third Voluntary National Review.

#### Synthesis of the results

Three working groups discussed the following questions during the session:

1. Which best-practice examples for accelerated and integrated transformation should be included in the VNR and presented for international peer learning?
2. Which challenges, e.g. ones in off-track areas of the German Sustainable Development Strategy, should be named as areas for Germany to seek partners and global cooperation?

Key points from the discussions are summarized in the following three main insights:

#### 1) *Accelerating transformation with digital technologies*

The [Pact for the Future](#), the [Global Digital Compact](#) and the United Nations resolution “[Seizing the opportunities of safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence systems for sustainable development](#)” (A/RES/78/265) adopted last year call on member states to make even greater use in the future of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) already discussed the potential and challenges of digitalization for sustainable development in its [2019 report “Towards our Common Digital Future”](#). The working groups identified other current examples of successful and promising approaches which Germany is already employing to promote sustainable development using digital solutions and innovations – and which could promote it even more in the future.

For example, since early 2023, [the electronic sick leave notice \(eAU\)](#) (webpage only available in German) has replaced the previous two-step procedure for issuing a certificate of incapacity for work (AU), relieving the pressure on medical practices, sick employees and their relatives, employers and health insurance providers ([SVR Gesundheit und Pflege \[Scientific Council on Health and Care\]](#) document only partially available in English).

Other approaches, such as the digital product passport or resource-efficient precision technologies and more efficient breeding techniques in the agricultural and food sectors (WBAE, EFI, ff. p.50), are to an extent still in the pioneering stage, as they have not yet been institutionalized in Germany through mandatory standard datasets or central databases.

Germany should proactively engage with other member states, particularly regarding forward-looking approaches and solutions, in order to leverage the potential of these technologies and digital solutions for transformation across different sectors from the outset (SRU [German Advisory Council on the Environment] – document only available in German, SVR Verbraucherfragen [The Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs]).

## 2) Shaping transformation together

Following a “whole-of-society” approach, the governance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs requires the participation of stakeholders and citizens – through both co-determination and co-creation.

Germany has extensive experience in negotiating integrative transformation policies and measures involving experts, citizens and stakeholders. At the national level, this experience ranges from the establishment of Study Commissions with the objective of finding consensus on overarching issues and informing parliamentary decision-making (see Schmittner, 1972, article only available in German) to the most recent setting-up of the first Citizens' Assembly of the German Bundestag, which addressed the topic “Food in Transition: Between Private Concerns and State Responsibilities”. The Assembly presented its recommendations as a citizens' report on 20 February 2024.

Germany has previously introduced such an instrument for citizen and stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of integrative transformation policies and measures at the HLPF. In a side event called “Just transition, but how?” jointly organized by Germany, Chile and the International Labour Organization, Germany shared its experience of working with the German Coal Commission.

The working groups identified numerous other current examples of successful and promising participation by experts, citizens and stakeholders in the development and implementation of integrative strategies, including:

- The German Protein Crop Strategy, e.g. through the Dialogue Forum “More Sustainable Protein Feed” and the “German Agricultural Research Alliance” (WBBGR)
- The German Water Strategy (WBGU)
- The German Land Use Reduction Target (Beirat für Raumentwicklung [advisory council on spatial development] at the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, BMWSB)
- The Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity (German Advisory Council on the Environment, SRU)

Building on the recommendation of the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report that member states strengthen their competencies and capacities at all levels to negotiate integrative transformation measures and policies, the German government could revisit this issue and discuss how participation and co-determination formats can identify synergies and negotiate goal conflicts – for example, distribution issues or competition for land use can be addressed by integrative funding programmes and strategies. However, the government should also critically reflect on why some proposals and campaign promises for resolving trade-offs – such as climate dividends – have not been implemented so far (The Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs).

The effectiveness of participatory formats and initiatives should be assessed comparatively and based on scientific research. As integrative policies and measures for implementing the 2030 Agenda increasingly involve negotiating fundamental aspects of basic services (e.g. affordable housing, food and energy), their effectiveness should not simply be assumed. The examples of participatory formats collected for the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards could serve as a basis for exchange with government representatives and civil society actors for instance from Mercosur countries that are partners of the EU under the recently signed free-trade agreement (EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement).



### 3) Integrated implementation measures and policies require integrated data

The impacts of the pandemic on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda demonstrated, too, that education and health data must be supplemented with additional data so as to enable integrative policies and measures, such as the Health in All Policies (HiaP) approach, for sustainable development *in, with and by* Germany (SVR Gesundheit und Pflege [Advisory Council on Health and Care]).

Scientific advice on integrative policies and measures for accelerating the 2030 Agenda/SDGs requires both the integrative collection of data, e.g. through long-term household monitoring (Advisory Council on Consumer Affairs), and the integration of existing data (Rat SWD [German Data Forum]). Unlike many countries of the Global South, Germany already possesses extensive data. However, deficits remain in integrating this data (Rat SWD). Germany should particularly address these deficits regarding health and education data through peer learning and cooperation with other member states (e.g. via the [German Data Forum](#)).

Data comparability is crucial, as education data in Germany and in other member states with a federal system is often collected differently across regions. In the health sector, Germany has made significant progress with the [Health Data Use Act](#) (GDNG), which came into force in spring 2024. However, as this and other laws promoting integrative data collection and use in Germany are still relatively new, the federal government could pursue further collaborations in the future. For the integrative collection and use of health and education data, cooperation with member states such as the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries would be particularly beneficial due to data comparability.

### Outlook: Transformation in, with and by Germany

Scientific consensus on the benefits of a more integrative approach does not replace the necessary democratic negotiation processes over related goal conflicts. However, integrated science-policy formats like the Dialogue of the Scientific Advisory Boards can enhance the visibility of, and scientific engagement with the 2030 Agenda and support political negotiation processes by providing scientifically validated insights.

The co-chairs of wpn2030 and SDSN Germany concluded the Dialogue 2024 II by highlighting the obstacles that must be overcome: increasing populism and anti-science sentiment – particularly in the context of a polarized election campaign – make it difficult to achieve broad “resonance” for scientific advice. Science and academia must succeed in convincingly formulating more concrete policy recommendations. Accordingly, in its [Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#), the [International Science Council](#) is prioritizing the topic of “Evidence-Based Policymaking”.

We therefore recommend addressing the science-related aspect of this year's HLPF theme (“science- and evidence-based solutions”) in the presentation of the VNR and incorporating Germany's experiences with integrative science-policy formats into peer-learning exchanges with other governments, advisory bodies and scientific organizations.

## Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region

### | In dialogue with society

## Sustainable development in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region: contribution to the Third German Voluntary National Review (German VNR), 2025

The Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region is actively working to implement the 2030 Agenda and has integrated sustainability as a strategic goal in its regional development. Through inter-municipal cooperation, digital participation formats, international comparability and cross-sector collaborations, sustainable transformation processes are being shaped. Since 2019, the Verband Region Rhein-Neckar (regional association) has systematically linked all measures with the SDGs (ARR resolution 49/19/01). The goal is to design regional infrastructure in an ecologically and socially responsible manner to ensure long-term high quality of life for the population.

### 1. Citizen participation and digital platforms

To ensure a participatory sustainability process, several online surveys were conducted. Between September and October 2020, 997 residents took part in an initial survey to identify key needs. In March 2024, a second survey was conducted to assess changes in public perceptions regarding the 2030 Agenda. These citizen surveys have been crucial in further developing the region's sustainability efforts and addressing the population's needs in a targeted manner.

In addition, digital participation formats were created to encourage citizen involvement. The platform "Sustainable in Dialogue" serves as an open forum for collecting innovative ideas for sustainable projects. In addition to the possibility of anonymous participation, registered users can actively engage in decision-making processes and thus contribute to shaping the future of the metropolitan region.

*Good Practice: The digital platform "Sustainable in Dialogue" has enabled the realisation of numerous sustainable initiatives initiated by the public.*

### 2. OECD monitoring and international comparability

One key step in measuring sustainable development in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region was its participation in the OECD project "A Territorial Approach to the SDGs". Since December 2020, the region has been working with the OECD and local partners to assess its sustainability performance in an international context. This process highlights both progress and areas requiring action in order to effectively promote sustainable development initiatives.

*Good practice: International comparability and exchange with various stakeholders.*

### 3. Sustainability monitoring and regional governance

To continuously track the progress of sustainable development, a regional monitoring system with relevant indicators (KPIs) was established. This system is designed not only to reflect the overall development of the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region but also to support municipalities in measuring their own progress and adjusting their actions accordingly. The [sustainability dashboard](#) (only available in German) is linked to the Metropolatlas Rhein-Neckar and the regional data portal. It is designed as an open-source solution, enabling it to be applied in other regions as well.

*Good Practice: Development of a regional monitoring system with relevant indicators (KPIs) that not only reflects the overall development of the metropolitan region but also helps municipalities measure their progress and adjust actions accordingly.*

### 4. Voluntary Local Review (VLR)

The Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region has published a Voluntary Local Review, documenting the region's progress on five prioritised SDGs: education (SDG 4),



renewable energy (SDG 7), sustainable urban development (SDG 11), responsible consumption (SDG 12) and climate action (SDG 13). The report serves as a model for other municipalities and aims to encourage them to develop their own sustainability reports. Link to the VLR: [Mediacenter-Publikationen](#) (most material in German)

***Good Practice:** The municipality of Dossenheim was one of the first smaller municipalities in the region to publish its own VLR, thus setting an example for sustainable development at the local level.*

### **5. Cross-sector sustainability conference**

To further strengthen the regional sustainability strategy, the first cross-sector sustainability conference will take place on 13 February 2025. This event will bring together stakeholders from business, academia, civil society and politics to develop joint strategies for promoting sustainable actions. A special focus will be placed on establishing sustainable business practices as an economic advantage and supporting companies and organisations in implementing new EU requirements for sustainability reporting.

***Good Practice:** Development of best-practice strategies for businesses to not just meet sustainability requirements but actually use them as a competitive advantage.*

### **Conclusion and outlook**

With its integrated sustainability activities, the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region is sending a strong signal for sustainable development at both the regional and the municipal level. Through monitoring, citizen participation and cross-sector cooperation, the region is positioning itself as a leader in sustainable transformation. A second, integrated sustainability report is planned to highlight the progress of municipalities and provide inspiration for other regions in Germany and Europe.

**Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO), German Federal Youth Council and Bündnis ZukunftsBildung (NGO Alliance for Future Education)**

***Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda: Features of sustainability governance in Germany***

## Promotion of transformation competencies

Germany's civil society is firmly committed to the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs in, with and by Germany, and plays a central role in this effort. In its actions, civil society is demonstrating that participation works. Civil society is a key player and decisive part of Germany's sustainability architecture. Germany's civil society has closely-knit networks, is innovative and is, in particular, indispensable for a strong education landscape. In Germany, education work is the second-largest field of activity of civil society.

The German Sustainable Development Strategy forms the framework for mainstreaming sustainable development in all fields of politics and society. One important element of implementing the 2030 Agenda is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the UNESCO ESD for 2030 Roadmap. The National Platform for Education for Sustainable Development, for which the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is the lead ministry, brings together representatives of employers' associations, civil society, academia, faith-based organisations and youth, and representatives of Germany's federal states (Länder) and federal government in support of ambitious implementation of SDG 4. One important part of the Platform is youpaN. This youth forum is supported by the Stiftung Bildung foundation, which is based on donations. The forum enables young people to play an active part in the process. The National Platform is a multi-stakeholder body, which makes it nearly unique in Germany's education sector. It is indispensable to the ambitious implementation of SDG 4. The Platform is also an example of successful participation.

ESD is extremely important for all people worldwide, and an integral part of the human right to education. The task of politics is to provide the right framework so that all people of all ages are equally able to learn to think and act sustainably. Systemically mainstreaming ESD in formal, non-formal and informal education is a vital step towards that goal. Using an inclusive approach in this endeavour facilitates broader participation and fosters the implementation of the SDGs. Places where people teach and learn about ESD issues also impact positively on communities. The "whole school in community" approach would facilitate mutual learning among international partners (see also [How can a Whole School Approach to Sustainability be Inclusive to All Learners?](#)). Another element that is essential to quicker implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda is peer learning initiatives.

**NGO Alliance for Future Education, which has the following members:**

Amnesty International, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), BUNDjugend (Young Friends of the Earth Germany), The German Education Union, Germanwatch, Greenpeace, Innowego, German Youth Association for the Protection of Nature, Oxfam and WWF

**Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO), German Federal Youth Council and Bündnis ZukunftsBildung (NGO Alliance for Future Education)**

## **| Transformation in action**

### **Multi-stakeholder partnerships and indivisibility – Germany's civil society for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

Civil society plays a key role for the holistic and systemic implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The German Sustainable Development Strategy highlights this through the key lever of “Social mobilisation and participation” and through the Area of Transformation “Human well-being and capabilities, social justice”. Ambitious, transformative and systemic implementation of the 2030 Agenda is evident in the active efforts of civil society in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with a view to enabling all people to take action and equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for a just future in line with the 2030 Agenda. ESD exemplifies the interconnectedness and indivisibility of the 17 SDGs. The joint report *Kräfte bündeln, Zukunft gestalten* (Pooling forces, shaping the future – only available in German) published by VENRO (Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations), the German Federal Youth Council and the Bündnis ZukunftsBildung (NGO Alliance for Future Education) and endorsed by the German government highlights the potential which civil society has for implementation: numerous civil society players in Germany are making it possible for people to experience ESD in ways that are practice-oriented and participatory and enable them to feel that they can make a difference, and for people to respond quickly to the crises of our times (innovation and adaptability). Simultaneously, the networks and expertise of civil society players facilitate the use of innovative approaches in education that go far beyond what government institutions can do by themselves. Civil society players are reaching people along the entire education continuum (knowledge integration and capacity building). The following two examples show the key impetus which civil society is able to give to the implementation of ESD and the 2030 Agenda.

#### **One World Promoters**

The One World Promoters' Programme of the Association of One World Regional Networks in Germany (agl) demonstrates the great potential of civil society networks and expertise for implementing the 2030 Agenda. More than 160 “Promoters” are working in various organisations across Germany to expand knowledge about the SDGs, foster civil society activity, build networks and bring a global perspective to the local efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

#### **Schools for Earth**

The Greenpeace Schools for Earth programme provides targeted support to teachers and school administrations so they can implement ESD as called for by politics and society. The programme thus contributes towards the goal of building capacities of educators which has been laid down in the ESD for 2030 Roadmap, and it supports efforts to make learning environments climate neutral, in line with the “whole institution” approach. Civil society ESD programmes like this one (which has been awarded the National ESD Award 2025 of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Commission for UNESCO) are indispensable, thanks to their long-standing experience with ESD as an education strategy and thanks to collaboration between a broad range of experts within this project and the large network.

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**Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO), German Federal Youth Council and Bündnis ZukunftsBildung (NGO Alliance for Future Education)**

## **| How Germany promotes education for better social participation**

### **How civil society and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

There are several challenges involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda in Germany. While progress has been made on integrating the SDGs in political processes, one key obstacle remains the fact that implementation is not binding. The new German Sustainable Development Strategy strengthens the coherence of the sustainability architecture and realises a number of important points so that sustainable development can, to a greater degree than before, become firmly established across all sectors as a task for all of society. Another welcome point is the introduction of an indicator for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which uses school labels to measure effective implementation through projects such as the World University Service's "Across Boundaries – Global Learning in Vocational Education" and Greenpeace's Schools for Earth initiative. These examples show how civil society activities can become part of the sustainability architecture.

Civil society offers a broad variety of programmes and can draw on expertise built up over decades, which enables it to improve education for all. Civil society is a key partner in the transformation towards the education needed in the future. In the past few years, ESD has also been advanced by players in the non-formal and informal learning sector. Adult education is just as indispensable to the realisation of SDG 4 as the empowerment of youth. Successful examples include the youth participation formats of Germany's federal ministries, such as the coordination unit for youth participation on climate issues at the German Federal Youth Council, the BMZ Youth Advisory Council and youpaN.

Notwithstanding these achievements, significant gaps remain: the SDGs are not given enough priority, and they are not sufficiently binding to guarantee effective implementation. Many civil society organisations are

struggling with inadequate funding and red tape. Civil society players are strengthening social cohesion and the implementation of the SDGs, for instance SDG 16, the Goal for peaceful and inclusive societies. Civil society requires more long-term, more needs-oriented support mechanisms, less bureaucracy and strong backing for education. Civil society activities also require civic space. Politics has to provide the right environment for the accelerated implementation of the SDGs. A stronger focus on participation, on mainstreaming of inclusive, equitable and quality education, and on civil society activity means more comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Overall, the German Sustainable Development Strategy needs to make implementation more binding and become a top priority for Germany's political action. Education for Sustainable Development, as one of the key levers, must be given stronger support, and civil society needs to be involved in the process as an equal partner and be given support. The time for action is now – and civil society is willing to do its part.

**Submitted by:** Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO), German Federal Youth Council and Bündnis ZukunftsBildung (NGO Alliance for Future Education,

**NGO Alliance for Future Education, which has the following members:** Amnesty International, BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), BUNDjugend (Young Friends of the Earth Germany), The German Education Union, Germanwatch, Greenpeace, Innowego, German Youth Association for the Protection of Nature, Oxfam and WWF

## UN Women

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***Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda:  
Features of sustainability governance in Germany and  
Transformation in action***

## **Implementation of feminist development policy and feminist foreign policy as part of the German Sustainable Development Strategy**

The realisation of gender equality is one of the fundamental prerequisites for sustainable development. The guidelines for Feminist Foreign Policy and the strategy for Feminist Development Policy, together with the systematic application of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, form an indispensable basis for this. That basis must continue to be expanded.

However, the three Rs (women's rights, resources and representation) laid down in Germany's feminist foreign and development policy must be implemented across ALL policy fields – including in national policies within Germany. Gender equality must become the guiding principle for all policy fields. The systematic use of gender impact assessments in combination with gender budgeting and a national gender equality strategy that is part of national legislation can help achieve the necessary acceleration of progress. This also means that all transformation processes must include an intersectional gender perspective.

In order to realise gender equality, structural disadvantages must be overcome, both nationally and internationally. This is the only way to achieve women's equal participation in all sectors of society, their economic independence, equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value, fair distribution of unpaid care work, improved work-family balance, equal opportunities for employment and advancement, and gender parity in parliaments and in leadership positions in governments, administrative bodies, the private sector, academia etc. – in short, equal opportunities to realise one's potential. By introducing binding and effective regulations to overcome structural disadvantages, such as the German Act on the Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and the Public Sector (FüPoG I and II), progress can be achieved in the short to medium term. Relying on voluntary action, by contrast, stalls progress. Investing in gender equality means investing in a better future for all, both nationally and internationally.

A life free of violence and the freedom to decide about their sexual and reproductive rights must become reality for all women and girls.

## Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e. V. (bezev)

### *How Germany promotes environmentally friendly infrastructure and mobility*

## Measures to “leave no one behind”

In 2020, bezev (full title: Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit e. V. – “disability and development cooperation”) formulated a joint paper with the German Disability Council in reaction to the version of the German Sustainable Development Strategy that was provided at that time for comment. The paper was entitled “Niemanden zurückzulassen braucht aufgeschlüsselte Daten!” (“Leave no one behind” requires disaggregated data). Since that paper’s recommendations remain valid, we will draw on them here once again.

As work on the German Sustainable Development Strategy progressed, more focus came to be placed on the social dimension of sustainability. Still, however, the planned strategies and measures do not adequately live up to the principle of “leave no one behind”, although people with disabilities and the issue of accessibility are mentioned at several points. People with disabilities are particularly hard hit by the existing and growing inequality in the world. So it was for good reason that the Call to Action expressed in the 2023 SDG Summit’s Political Declaration calls for measures to reach first of all those who are most severely disadvantaged, including people with disabilities.

The guiding principle of “leave no one behind” is solidly cemented within the principles and ambitions of the German Sustainable Development Strategy; yet the strategy does not describe the measures that will be taken to achieve those ambitions. They are also missing from the strategy’s targets and indicators, making it impossible at present to determine whether all people are, in fact, being reached or who (due to what discrimination factor) is being left behind in various areas. The

version of the strategy made available for comment fell badly short on this principle.

To close that gap, we continue to recommend the following measures for reducing discrimination of people with disabilities both nationally and internationally.

1. Germany has an internationally recognised sustainability architecture and sustainability governance. Yet the structures are not yet designed to systemically collect data on disadvantaged groups, as called for in paragraph 74g of the 2030 Agenda. The indicators provide no information on whether disadvantaged groups are also being reached through the goals set out. People with disabilities are not mentioned once in the national indicators, even though 11 of the 231 global indicators mention people with disabilities. Through its national indicators, Germany contributes to the global indicators. By failing to disaggregate its data, it is not reporting on the extent to which the goals have been reached for people with disabilities.

This gap in national monitoring should be remedied as follows:

- a. The first step would be to disaggregate existing data, for example on indicator 4.1.a “early school leavers” (18- to 24-year-olds without a school leaving certificate); indicator 5.1.a “gender pay gap”; indicator 8.5.a “employment rate total” (20- to 64-year-olds), to include the factor “persons with disabilities”. Following the introduction in 2024 of the OECD-DAC policy marker on inclusion, indicator 17.1 “Official development assistance as a proportion of gross national income” could provide disaggregated data.



b. Since there is still a lack of data on the SDGs and people with disabilities, it is recommended that the sustainability architecture be extended to include a body (e.g. a commission) that would help to close that data gap (the UN Statistical Commission has established a working group for the purpose) so as to systematically flesh out the indicators contained in the German Sustainable Development Strategy with internationally comparable data. A body of this kind should be made up of Germany's statistical offices (the Federal Statistical Office and the offices of the individual states), representatives of public administration, academia, human rights institutions and civil society, including the organisations of persons with disabilities. It could take as its point of reference the human rights indicators that OHCHR developed for monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Since there is a considerable amount of overlap between the SDGs and the rights of persons with disabilities as defined in the CRPD, it would make sense to adopt these indicators as they could be used for the monitoring of both international agreements.

The new body could be given a broad mandate that would enable it to collect disaggregated data not only on persons with disabilities but also on other disadvantaged groups.

2. In Germany, as elsewhere, people with disabilities continue to experience systemic discrimination. This occurs in education, employment and health and also with regard to a lack of accessibility in the infrastructure. With reference to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities regarding Germany's second and third periodic reports, specific measures should be incorporated into the Sustainable Development Strategy to overcome discrimination of persons with disabilities. The Strategy could, for example, include the provision that mobility and building and construction should not only always be sustainable but also accessible. For SDG 4 on education, a strategy with a timetable, targets and indicators should be incorporated so as to ensure access to a quality, inclusive education system in all German states.

The German government is hosting the Global Disability Summit from 2 to 3 April 2025. The focus will be on overcoming inequality and ensuring equal participation of people with disabilities in all areas of society, policymaking and the economy. There needs to be good monitoring of strategies aimed at realising the rights of persons with disabilities so that gaps can be identified and dedicated measures introduced to improve their situation.

**Statement by the German Federal Youth Council, the UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development and Greenpeace Germany on the forthcoming 2025 VNR report, with the involvement of various youth participation bodies and delegate programmes**

***Core elements of German sustainability governance and cooperation with relevant social groups***

## **Cooperation with young people**

Young people are strongly supportive of the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs in, with and by Germany. The inclusion of civil society, and young people in particular, in implementing the 2030 Agenda is key to speeding up progress towards the SDGs. That inclusion is not about decision-makers being generous; rather, it is the young generation's right. What is more, they are the ones who will be affected the longest by the political decisions made today. Although a fifth of the world's population is between 15 and 25, young people often have few means of influencing political and social issues. Yet many have a network of international contacts and can serve as a professional resource with unique expertise that can be drawn on in shaping today's and tomorrow's world. Sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda are keys to justice – between both societies and generations. Young people's views on Germany's National Sustainability Strategy worldwide show that Germany's efforts are having an impact and can truly lead to immense progress on the 2030 Agenda.

In the German sustainability architecture it has become clear that participation works. Youth organisations, such as the German Federal Youth Council, the youth participation formats established within German ministries and the UN Youth Delegation for sustainable development, are indispensable in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They bring with them unique creativity and expertise, have intrinsic motivation to effect change, and actively reflect the connections between the SDGs in their lives.

Yet young people in Germany and across the world are greatly concerned about the SDGs, which are not globally on track. Indeed, progress in some areas has actually been reversed. Young people are also observing with concern the implementation of the SDGs within Germany. The guiding principle of “leave no one behind” remains and the interlinkages between, for example, SDGs 4, 5, 13 and 16 should be leveraged in order to speed up progress. Education is the key to a self-determined life and inclusion in society, economic activity and political processes. It is essential to speed up progress on implementing SDG 4, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and UNESCO's “ESD for 2030” programme. The principle of “leave no one behind” must be applied, in accordance with SDG 5, to mean the gender-specific inclusion of all people, particularly marginalised groups and those facing multiple forms of discrimination. Gender-based violence towards women affects not only the women themselves but can also impact on the development of any children they may have. Violence towards women is an abuse of human rights. Young people are already feeling the impact of the climate crisis and future generations will be massively influenced by it and face immense challenges. That is why young people are strongly campaigning for increased climate action (SDG 13). Furthermore, young people are drivers of change and upholders of peace. Those are qualities that should be leveraged and strengthened (SDG 16).

The young generation is clamouring for global justice and a peaceful future. There is an urgent need to accord these aims the priority they deserve and at last speed up progress towards them.



**Statement by the German Federal Youth Council,  
the UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development  
and Greenpeace Germany on the forthcoming 2025  
VNR report, with the involvement of various youth  
participation bodies and delegate programmes**

**| In dialogue with society**

## **Coordination Office for Youth Participation in Climate Policy**

Young people are asserting their right to participation, which is vital for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Young people are growing up in the midst of multiple crises for which they are not responsible. Participation allows them to experience agency, which is essential for creating a just and healthy future for all.

Youth participation is vital in engendering a sense amongst young people that the processes and institutions on which society rests have legitimacy. Ultimately, it is they who will implement the political decisions made today in decades to come.

Young people make an indispensable contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They have creative and innovative ideas and approaches for resolving global and local problems. They also have unique expertise which should be incorporated into national and international decision-making processes if they are not to risk being incomplete and ineffective.

One example of successful youth participation since the last VNR in 2021 has been the establishment of the Coordinating Office for Youth Participation in Climate Change Issues at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate, which is coordinated and organised by the German Federal Youth Council. The quality standards and guidelines governing this process were developed with and by young people. The process creates a framework within which youth associations and organisations can obtain the information they need to enable them to select the issues they want to get involved in and on which they want to express to legislators and decision-makers their opinions and demands.

One example of best practice in Germany is the UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development programme, which has been in existence since 2002. The Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development repeatedly show the effectiveness of recognising young people as experts on their own lived reality. Negotiations on sustainability issues, for example at the United Nations Environment Assembly, produce imaginative, innovative and enhanced results when young people are involved in the process.

The youth participation formats established by the federal ministries in Germany show how young people can be given a structurally established seat at the negotiating table and easier access to the responsible politicians and decision-makers. The youPAN project at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, for instance, gives young people the right to have their voices heard and to cast their votes as part of a national multistakeholder platform for sustainable development. They engage in discussions with politicians and decision-makers and were actively involved in the drafting of the paper on Germany's implementation of the UNESCO "ESD for 2030" programme.

**Statement by the German Federal Youth Council, the UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development and Greenpeace Germany on the forthcoming 2025 VNR report, with the involvement of various youth participation bodies and delegate programmes**

**| Adjustments made to sustainability governance to date**

## Youth participation is essential for SDG implementation

Youth participation is a right; it strengthens the legitimacy of political processes and supports implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Youth participation should not just be symbolic and lead to co-optation or youth-washing. The young generation must have the chance to truly influence decision-making. It is important to involve young people particularly in the settings in which they operate. Specific guidelines must be put in place for systematic youth participation and consideration of intersectionality. Marginalised young people are generally structurally excluded, globally and in Germany. That makes it important to have accessible and inclusive forms of participation so that all young people are able to have a voice. The emancipation of the younger generation is vital in accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Youth participation boosts the impact because young people in particular can provide fresh viewpoints and a desire for change.

Education and research play a key role in implementation of the SDGs. They strengthen people's capacity to develop resilience and find solutions that can be applied to an increasingly complex world. Education and research are vital as a basis for sustainable transformation processes that will lead to a liveable future. The links between SDGs 4, 5, 13 and 16 must also be strengthened in order to enhance their impact. By, for example, supporting education programmes for women in girls in rural regions that are under threat from climate change, it is possible to pursue an integrated approach that tackles all four of those SDGs. Civil society is crucial for the achievement of the SDG targets. It must be strengthened through adequate

resourcing and effective participation. The cutting of the development budget in Germany and internationally is a cause for concern. The budget should not drop below 0.7% of GNI. It is our common future that is at stake, on the only planet that all humans have.

To speed up implementation of the SDGs, there need to be strategies, methods and resources in place for effective youth participation. There is also a need to showcase examples from other countries and regions showing how young people there are actively contributing to their country's VNR efforts. To answer this question, the international views of young people from countries such as Uganda and Kenya were sought. They emphasised that more South-North partnerships were needed that focus on innovation, technology transfer and capacity building for youth-led initiatives. The international dialogue between youth organisations is fuelling progress. One good example of this is the Children and Youth Group associated with the UN Environment Programme. It brings together young people from the Global North and Global South to work together on various aspects of sustainable development. Young people are drivers of change and upholders of peace. Youth participation also strengthens implementation of Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) resolutions and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolutions. These resolutions must be strengthened and funding made available for their global implementation. Successful SDG implementation will require inclusive decision-making, prioritisation, policy coherence, resource mobilisation, transparency and innovation. The 2030 Agenda requires a dialogue between nations. Often, the

views of young people are not reflected in this, even though those views allow capacity building that is both sustainable and valuable in terms of content. That is why the German Sustainable Development Strategy should draw in particular on the input of young people from the most vulnerable regions. It would be helpful to gain their point of view and would embody the principle of “leave no one behind”.

It can be concluded that, without incorporating the viewpoints of young people, national and international plans to implement the 2030 Agenda risk being incomplete and ineffective. Young people are not only the beneficiaries but also actively contribute to sustainable development. If they were left out, it would leave a major gap in areas like innovation, social inclusion and grass-roots mobilisation. Their participation is vital to achieving sustainable solutions and a successful future.

This statement was drafted jointly by the German Federal Youth Council, the UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development and Greenpeace Germany

With the involvement of various youth participation bodies (Coordinating Office for Youth Participation in Climate Change Issues, Working Group on Youth and Foreign Climate Policy, youpaN) and delegate programmes (young delegates from NAJU (Youth Association for the Protection of Nature) to the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) and the Children and Youth Major Group to the UN Environment Programme, e.g. a sustainability activist from Kenya)

**German Trade Union Confederation  
(DGB)**

***Core elements of German sustainability governance and  
cooperation with relevant social groups***

**Trade unions as actors for sustainable transformation**

For the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund – DGB) and its affiliates, the German Sustainability Strategy and the 2030 Agenda serve as key guidelines for combining inclusive growth with social and gender-equitable progress within planetary boundaries.

Given the tangible impacts of recent crises, climate change and geopolitical shifts, a strong and holistic sustainability framework is more important than ever. This challenge can only be met through the collaboration of politics, society, business and trade unions.

The current Sustainable Development Strategy acknowledges the significance of various stakeholders. However, the process should be made more transparent, and more direct interaction between the governance of the Sustainable Development Strategy and key actors should be ensured – for example through stronger institutional links via the State Secretaries' Committee.

Furthermore, greater emphasis must be placed on embedding the Sustainable Development Strategy across society, within companies, and directly among people on the ground. To achieve this, existing structures need to be strengthened and expanded. Through trade union work in companies and regions, the DGB is working to improve people's living and working conditions in concrete ways.

On an international level, cooperation must be strengthened, and knowledge transfer facilitated. Together with the International Trade Union Confederation, the DGB is advocating for workers' rights worldwide through the "Time for 8" campaign, aiming to raise global living standards and achieve a just transition.

**German Trade Union Confederation  
(DGB)**

***National system of targets and indicators:  
how Germany measures progress and Expansion of renewable energies***

**Decent work**

The 2025 revision of the German Sustainable Development Strategy strengthens the aspect of Decent Work for the first time by including collective bargaining coverage as a key indicator. This acknowledges the fact that Decent Work, strong trade unions and works and staff councils are essential prerequisites for both combating poverty (SDG 1) and reducing inequalities (SDG 5, SDG 10). They foster decent working conditions, fair wages, gender-equal pay and the enforcement of workers' rights. They form the foundation for a thriving economy that raises living standards globally and reduces poverty. The principle of Decent Work (SDG 8) is thus a key starting point for achieving many other Sustainable Development Goals.

The DGB and its affiliates are driving sustainable development forward through various projects and trade union initiatives. One example is the DGB-initiated project "Revierwende". This project aims to actively support the structural transformation resulting from the coal phase-out at both the local and work-place levels, provide security in times of change and offer concrete support to people on the ground.

**German Trade Union Confederation  
(DGB)**

**| Lessons learned for current and future fields of action**

## **Trade unions for societal participation**

The impacts of the many crises are still omnipresent. The economy is stagnating, the investment backlog for a future-proof country is growing and geopolitical conflicts are on the rise. At the same time, the challenges of transformation processes are greater than ever, increasingly straining public acceptance of change.

Against this backdrop, promoting social participation, social cohesion, gender equality and international solidarity is more important than ever. Reliable and sustainable prospects for the future are needed, along with a proactive, forward-looking policy that creates new opportunities before value chains are irreversibly disrupted. Strengthening industrial value creation is just as crucial as upgrading and expanding quality service-sector jobs and ensuring gender-equitable organisation of unpaid care and household work.

As trade unions, we advocate globally for the fair distribution of prosperity, ensuring Decent Work within planetary boundaries while upholding human and labour rights. We support the German government in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Our core concern is to secure decent working conditions, fair wages and work-place democracy through social partnership, co-determination, and collective agreements. Co-determination structures enhance the sustainability of corporate policies, ensure a fair balance of interests within companies and provide security in times of change. SDG 8 is thus a key starting point for achieving many other Sustainable Development Goals.

**German Trade Union Confederation  
(DGB)**

**| Statement for the future**

## **Outlook**

The 2030 Agenda has to play a central role in sustainable development up to 2030 and beyond. In the face of global challenges, the retreat from international institutions, national go-it-alone approaches and increasing pressure on multilateralism, international cooperation is more crucial than ever. Global issues such as fighting poverty and mitigating climate change can only be solved collectively. Trade unions, in particular, stand for international solidarity and play a key role in enforcing social and environmental standards.

Only strong labour organisations are able to negotiate on an equal footing with governments and employers in social dialogue. It is therefore essential to expand and support democratic trade unions worldwide. To achieve and sustain the goals of the 2030 Agenda in the long term, democratic structures must be strengthened, international cooperation must be promoted and social justice must be ensured.

**RNE, SDSN Germany,  
SRU (Advisory Council on the Environment)**

***Sustainability policy – together with the Länder and municipalities,  
Expansion of renewable energies,  
Germany assumes responsibility for spillover effects and  
Lessons learned for current and future fields of action***

## **How sustainability can become a guiding principle of public service delivery in Germany**

Germany should see enabling all citizens to live sustainably as a duty. To achieve this, sustainability needs to be a guiding principle of public service delivery. It must be the task of state regulation to ensure that acting sustainably is the most obvious choice for citizens and companies and therefore the default option. In this context, Germany's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reached critical junctures, in some cases requiring increased efforts and in others a change of direction:

- With respect to the expansion of renewable energy, in particular, Germany has made significant strides in recent years. More than 50% of electricity consumed in Germany now comes from renewable energy sources. This is a great achievement that needs to be continued and expanded in an environmentally friendly and citizen-oriented way, particularly by including the buildings and transport sectors to a greater extent.
- Reciprocal partnerships worldwide built on trust are becoming increasingly important due to uncertain supply chains, the need for raw materials and geopolitical changes. With its circular economy strategy and the innovative capacity of its businesses (Cradle to Cradle programmes, for example), Germany has made important progress. This needs to be expanded through fair and equitable global trade and development partnerships for investment in sustainable economic structures.
- Municipalities are places where citizens can actively shape and experience the sustainability transformation. A host of projects in Germany have shown that the SDGs benefit enormously from decentralisation and a local governance approach. Sustainability, including climate action, should therefore be recognised as a collective and thus central task for municipalities in all areas and should be ensured through sufficient funding.
- Good governance requires the participation of citizens, so that they become subjects rather than merely objects of the transformation. Citizens are not just addressees but also the agents and an active part of the transformation processes. With this goal in mind, Germany can build on good experience negotiating transformation policy with citizens and stakeholders (such as the German Coal Commission, German Commission on the Future of Agriculture and German Gas Commission). Various dialogue platforms with citizens have also been developed where the aim is not simply to exchange views but to gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives. However, efforts to translate this into concrete policy are often inadequate. Moreover, in many areas the level of participation is still insufficient, or not all population groups are equally involved. Digitalisation, in particular, offers opportunities for citizens to participate in transformation processes efficiently and directly.



- Germany is under pressure to change in order to maintain its competitive edge, firstly due to the comparatively high costs of energy, raw materials and labour, but also due to the inequality of educational opportunities, high levels of red tape and its outdated infrastructure (including digitalisation bottlenecks). Greater efforts and investment are therefore needed in order to ensure future viability. Innovative, socially just and climate-stabilising – in other words sustainable! – policies are the solution here. Addressing this challenge must be made a priority in the further implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Germany.

Joint statement by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany and the German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) on Germany's third Voluntary National Review in 2025

## RNE & SDSN Germany

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### | *Statement for the future*

## Germany's contribution to the implementation of the Pact for the Future

As an export nation and Europe's strongest economy, Germany has a particular interest in expanding global cooperation relationships, especially in light of increasingly disruptive policymaking and geopolitical rivalries. Actively contributing to the implementation of the commitments and actions set out in the Pact for the Future of September 2024 must be an overarching objective for Germany in the coming years. The overall aim in this context is to contribute to the realisation of a fairer world order. This means that Germany should not drop its pace or reduce its ambitions. Solutions need to be found – within the framework of the United Nations, for example – to provide equal opportunities for people here and in low- and middle-income countries.

Germany must play a leading role in two respects in particular that are key to achieving all SDGs:

### 1. Financing sustainable development

To coincide with the Financing for Development Conference in June/July 2025, Germany must make concrete, actionable proposals for funding sustainable development at the global level or it must support existing proposals.

When it comes to the formulation of Germany's financial policy, this means: no cuts in development cooperation, alignment with the 0.7% target and greater financial scope for investment through reform of the debt brake. Globally, the focus must be on debt relief initiatives for poorer countries, reforming the Common Framework for Debt Treatments and creating an international framework for sovereign default.

To enable low- and middle-income countries to strengthen their own resources, Germany must promote the development of those countries' tax systems and provide positive support for negotiations on the design of a fair global tax system in a UN context. The realisation of a global minimum tax for the ultra-rich must be actively implemented by Germany.

Greater emphasis also needs to be placed on mobilising private investors. Efforts must be made to enable faster, easier and more extensive investment in sustainability.

Global public goods (especially tackling climate change and the biodiversity crisis) need to be placed at the centre of the international financial architecture.

Innovative approaches must be supported, not dismissed; this includes allocating special drawing rights through the IMF on the basis of a country's level of need rather than shareholder quotas.

### 2. Fighting gender-specific inequalities (SDG 5)

Germany must resolutely strive for equality between women and men and oppose all attempts to diminish and limit women's rights. At the global level this means strengthening the sexual and reproductive rights of women and contributing to determined efforts to counter all forms of violence against women, especially in the year marking the 30th anniversary of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women. The design of Germany's foreign and development policy serves as a role model in this respect.

**Further areas in which targeted support from Germany is required:**

- Supporting steps to stop both climate change and biodiversity loss
- Contributing to strongly promoting access to sustainable energy in low- and middle-income countries
- Contributing to establishing health systems in poorer countries and doing everything necessary to finally eliminate HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as reducing the very high excess mortality caused by air pollution (more than 8 million additional deaths each year) once and for all
- Submitting proposals on the regulation of platforms and the use of AI, including the integration of key elements of the Global Digital Compact into the German Sustainable Development Strategy.

Joint statement by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany on Germany's third Voluntary National Review in 2025

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**German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE),  
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany,  
German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) and  
German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU)**

## | *Statement for the future*

### Key aspects of the Beyond-2030 Agenda

Amid multiple crises and upheavals, the 2030 Agenda is more important than ever as a global guiding framework and mandate. It commits all countries to the SDGs and emphasises their cooperation. It is grounded in human rights and worldwide development in a global consultation process, which lends it legitimacy. Current analyses show that efforts need to be stepped up considerably if the goals, which are further defined in the Pact for the Future, are to be achieved by 2030. In light of technical, social and geopolitical developments, a number of additional challenges must also be factored in and considered. With regard to the content, an agenda beyond 2030 should continue to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals intensively so as to ensure that the goals that have been achieved are secured in the long term and still meet those that are as yet outstanding. Beyond 2030, we propose that the SDGs be further developed to include the following points as part of a transformation agenda:

#### **1. Digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI)**

It is important to harness the disruptive power of digitalisation for the sustainability transformation. AI offers the potential to solve global challenges such as the optimisation of resources or of early warning systems for natural disasters. To minimise misuse, the risks for individuals and democratic societies, inequality and discrimination, the concentration of power, and the surveillance and manipulation of the media and public opinion, there is a need for global governance structures, transparency, ethical guidelines, clear legislation and the expansion of public digital infrastructures.

#### **2. Sustainable financing of sustainable development**

In addition to public funding, mobilising private investment is also crucial. Innovative financing instruments, such as green loans, tax incentives and public-private partnerships, can free up capital for sustainable projects. Low- and middle-income countries need targeted support from international funds and social security systems. Fundamental reform of the international financial architecture is needed, including reform of the debt system and the development of a sovereign default system and solidarity tax systems.

#### **3. Fighting global and domestic inequality**

Reducing economic, social and health disparities and the unjust consequences of environmental damage, including climate damage, requires tax reform, the promotion of education and equal opportunities, and the removal of trade barriers for poorer countries. Strengthening women's rights and minorities, and access to international markets are essential.

#### **4. Pandemic prevention and planetary health**

Cumulative causes of environmental, social and health problems and potential synergies in resolving them, as well as the role of healthy living conditions, should be given greater consideration. Global monitoring systems, investment in research and research partnerships, and fair access to medical resources are necessary to prevent health crises. Local health infrastructure needs to be strengthened and international cooperation expanded.

## **5. Integrated approaches for water use and land use**

Sustainable management of natural resources on land and at sea creates positive interactions with all other SDGs. Use and protection aspects should be integrated on all land surfaces and in all parts of the water cycle. In particular, soil moisture needs to be integrated into water legislation as a protected good, and transboundary, climate-resilient water management is required.

## **6. Circular economies**

Circular economy models should be promoted through various instruments. Companies and consumers must be supported in establishing resource-efficient practices. Developing global standards for the circular economy would promote international trade and cooperation. In public procurement, in particular, recyclates and recyclables need to become standard.

## **7. Better measurability and indicators**

Standardised indicators and real-time data are crucial in making progress measurable and identifying challenges at an early stage. This also includes measuring spillover effects whereby one country's consumption and production structures hamper the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in other countries. New prosperity indicators that better represent non-monetary aspects are also needed. Transparency and accountability should be strengthened through independent institutions (above all, national statistical offices) and civil society engagement.

To underpin the future sustainability agenda, education for sustainable development should be strengthened, cooperation between governments, companies and society promoted, and local and municipal solutions supported. The momentum for implementing the 2030 Agenda can be maintained if there are prospects of its continued development beyond 2030. To this end, stakeholder structures and space for discourse, in which important implementation actors such as multilateral financial institutions are also included, should be established now at the multilateral, regional and local levels.

Europe and Germany should view global sustainable development as a strategic priority and pursue this by building effective alliances on all continents, in order to prevent social polarisation, autocratisation and geopoliticisation and at the same time tackle global environmental and economic challenges together.

Joint statement by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany, the German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) and the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) on Germany's third Voluntary National Review 2025

| **Transformation in action****Dialogue format on the German Sustainable Development Strategy: DNS-Labs**

Societal transformations towards sustainability are complex and require the involvement of society as a whole. In order to make such transformations effective, the co-production of knowledge and political options for action at the interface between academia, politics and society is key. In order to ensure effective implementation and further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (Deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie, DNS), there is a need, in particular, to continuously explore newly emerging topics and develop input rooted in science so as to (further) drive transformations. To this end, the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpn2030) has developed, among other things, the “DNS-Lab” format. The DNS-Lab is a compact, agile and co-creative dialogue format which generates integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface for the German Sustainable Development Strategy in a transdisciplinary manner, across government ministries and based on exchange with academia. The wpn2030 Platform also makes the scientific methods of the format available to other stakeholders ([wpn2030, 2024a](#) (web page only available in German); [Löpelt et al., 2024](#) (publication only available in German)).

A DNS-Lab brings together 10–30 stakeholders from academia, public policy and administration, civil society and business for a short period to share their perspectives on a specific issue and engage in joint reflection. The aim of this format is to develop ideas and input for policymaking, research and societal transformation ([wpn2030, 2024a](#) (web page only available in German); [Löpelt et al., 2024](#) (publication only available in German)). The format, which is part of transformative research, is not only intended to provide a basis for societal transformations but also to influence such

transformations ([Di Giulio & Defila, 2020, p. 5f.](#) (publication only available in German)). It involves systematic interlinking of scientific analysis and practitioners' needs, for example through targeted questions on the areas of transformation and levers of the Strategy and their systemic interrelationships. International peer learning also creates a global perspective and enables mutual learning. The DNS-Lab format is therefore considered a best practice example of an interactive format at the interface between academia, politics and society that contributes to the ambitious, transformative and systemic implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the whole-of-society approach in Germany.

Most recently, this became evident on 10 December 2024, when two parallel wpn2030 DNS-Labs took place at Technische Universität Berlin. Over 40 representatives from academia, public policy and administration, civil society and business came together to jointly develop implementation steps for sustainable communal catering and to explore the topic of capacity building for the sustainability transformation based on the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 ([wpn2030, 2024b](#) (web page only available in German)). The latter example illustrates the potential of the format to stimulate transdisciplinary sustainability discourses in Germany through international scientific findings.

## | *Lessons learned for current and future fields of action*

### Capacities for a sustainable transformation

Shaping and accelerating the transformation towards sustainability across society as a whole requires a wide range of capacities in the spheres of politics, academia, civil society and business ([Global Sustainable Development Report, 2023](#)). To accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in, with and by Germany, capacity building during the transformation process in Germany and in the international context is a key challenge. Special consideration should be given to the following aspects<sup>6</sup>:

Capacities include financial, time and human resources, subject-specific and multidisciplinary expertise and an enabling institutional environment. Training and retraining programmes tailored to specific target groups are needed to develop and build capacity. However, it is vital to not only develop new capacity but also use existing capacity efficiently. With a view to meeting capacity requirements and filling gaps, a needs assessment should first be carried out to identify such requirements and gaps.

The definition of common goals and visions (that go beyond the duration of legislative periods) is vital for a public policy and administration sector that uses a long-term perspective and is characterised by continuity. Connections should be forged and new alliances should be formed across ministries, sectors and stakeholder groups. Conflict management and the combining of social forces are key competencies for dealing with veto players in transformation processes and responding to the declining political commitment to sustainability.

Continuous communication from policymakers to society throughout the entire transformation process is key to its success. For instance, shared positive narratives of the transformation should be formed and communicated from the outset. To create a “new normal”, society must also develop new values, rituals and traditions.

Backing up the transformation process through scientific work at the science-policy-society interface is essential for evidence-based, forward-looking and socially relevant policymaking. There is also a need for protected space with enough time, money and freedom to try “outside-the-box” innovations. In addition, we need a better error culture that emphasises iterative learning processes.

We need more peer learning – internationally, between ministries and between federal and Länder (state) authorities – and qualitative and quantitative research on peer learning. Peer learning on sustainability skills and innovations in administration would be a promising option with Brazil, India, South Africa and Indonesia, for example ([Grimm, Díaz & Alves, 2022](#)).

<sup>6</sup> In the [DNS-Lab format](#) (web page only available in German) meeting held by the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpn2030) on 10 December 2024, 25 experts from public policy and administration, academia, civil society and business jointly explored needs, challenges and possible solutions for capacity building during the transformation process in Germany and in the international context ([wpn2030, 2024](#) – web page only available in German). Some of the most important findings are summarised here.



wpn2030, Technical University of Berlin &  
University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück

## **Transformation towards sustainable agricultural and food systems**

### **Promoting communal catering**

The transformation area of sustainable agricultural and food systems represents a key challenge for implementing the 2030 Agenda in, with and by Germany. There is great potential here, as all SDGs are directly or indirectly linked to agricultural and food systems. However, there are significant implementation deficits.

Communal catering plays a key role in this, as a central interface between agriculture and consumers that can significantly influence sustainable diets. Although the German government has recognised the importance of this area in its Food and Nutrition Strategy, there is still a lack of concrete indicators to measure progress. The future results of the quantitative study on the level of knowledge, experience and implementation of a plant-based diet at schools and daycare centres conducted by the [KAHUpE](#) project (web page only available in German) can serve as an initial basis.

In addition, there are already numerous parallel initiatives to promote more sustainable communal catering. However, these are often funded for a limited period and on a project basis, for example the model regions competition “Ernährungswende in der Region” (“Regional Food Transition”) and the IN FORM initiative. To create synergies and achieve sustainable impact beyond the duration of individual projects, a long-term structure is needed for pooling efforts, facilitating exchange and generating broad impact. One promising solution, which was developed as part of an expert workshop<sup>7</sup>, would be to set up multi-professional “Pilot

Centres” at the Länder (federal state) level as a supporting element for the Länder Networking Centres (daycare and school catering and catering in senior living communities) and as a communication point for all partners in the value chain (including producer groups, producers, logistics, communal catering etc.).

Sustainable choices in the agricultural and food system must become more accessible and attractive, for example through a more sustainable design of the advertising environment. Economic instruments such as sustainability-oriented taxation and levies on food could be a solution for creating incentives for more sustainable production and consumption systems ([WBAE, 2020](#); [Citizens' Assembly “Nutrition in Transition”, 2024](#)). A strategy for sustainability-oriented food taxation could make a significant contribution here.

<sup>7</sup> The workshop was held on 10 December 2024 in the “DNS-Lab” format (web page only available in German) by the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 in cooperation with TU Berlin and Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences on transforming sustainable communal catering. Eighteen experts from the fields of public policy and administration, academia, civil society and business were actively involved.

## Federation of German Local Authority Associations

### *Sustainability policy – together with the Länder and municipalities and Statement for the future*

## Shaping sustainability at the local level

**Municipal sustainability management:** Municipalities have a very important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. County districts, towns and cities, and local communities are central players here! Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue and affects all fields of action at the municipal level. Municipalities localise the 2030 Agenda in municipal sustainability strategies, underpinning the Goals with measures and plans for implementation. As a result, the SDGs are increasingly becoming a fixed item in municipal budgets. It is of key importance that sustainability goals are interlinked and it is also best that they are interlinked with an impact-oriented budget.

In signing the declaration “[The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Building Sustainability at the Local Level](#)”, 265 German municipalities have made a commitment to local and global sustainable development. More than 240 municipalities across Germany have already drawn up SDG reviews and sustainability strategies or implemented digital SDG monitoring. The number of municipal sustainability reports is also constantly growing. Around 100 municipalities have already published comprehensive sustainability reports. A suitable instrument for doing this is the [Local Sustainability Reporting Framework](#) (*Berichtsrahmen Nachhaltige Kommune – BNK*). This framework has so far been applied by around 30 municipalities. The version of the BNK further developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) in cooperation with the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu), the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) was published in October 2024 and is supported by the associations of local authorities, the LAG21 (Agenda 21 state working committee) and the KGSt (municipal association for administration management). Other municipalities use their own reporting formats. The SDG indicators for municipalities are a suitable basis

for the data. The SDG portal (<https://sdg-portal.de/en/>) is another option for drawing up standardised or individualised sustainability reports. Sustainability reports set out the status quo with regard to achieving the SDGs. In addition, they are a way for municipalities to gather details about the progress they have made in terms of sustainable development and steer the process. So far, 18 municipalities have already drafted [Voluntary Local Reviews](#) (VLRs) in accordance with international standards, reporting their progress in implementing the 17 SDGs to the United Nations. Municipalities regularly participate in international United Nations conferences (High-Level Political Forum, Habitat, World Urban Forum, Climate Summit) or OECD conferences, and discuss the best-possible implementation strategies with global institutions.

**Global partnerships:** Furthermore, there are more than 800 partnerships between German municipalities and municipalities from the Global South, including more than 100 climate and sustainability partnerships. SDG indicators are also increasingly being taken into account in the work of the partnerships. In 2024, the partner cities Bremen, Durban and Windhoek published their first joint SDG report with a focus on SDGs 6, 11, 13 and 17. Via platforms like “Connective Cities” or the “Club of Agenda 2030 municipalities”, the German associations of local authorities participate alongside associations and networks from 15 partner countries in a learning process for drafting and employing VLRs. German cities were a driving force in establishing the SDG Task Force of the city network Eurocities with more than 50 European cities as a learning platform and forum for the representation of their interests.

**Sustainability as a task for the whole of society.** The only way to successfully implement sustainable development is if local policymakers and local authorities, businesses at the local and regional levels, cultural

entities and civil society all work together. Municipalities are the driving forces here for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Locally embedded initiatives contribute towards achieving the SDGs; in many municipalities, so-called sustainability councils bring diverse actors together. They are a way for the topic of sustainability to also be addressed as a task for the whole of society. Municipalities organise creative campaigns, competitions and exhibitions in order to strengthen public awareness of the SDGs. Furthermore, they embed sustainability in their city strategies and city budgets.

**What has commitment to sustainability by municipalities achieved overall?** The development of the SDG indicators for municipalities since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda has been a mixed bag. It is important to make a clear distinction between aspects where municipalities have a direct influence and aspects where decisions depend on the actions of national or sub-national legislators. This is clearest in the case of SDG 11, the communities goal, where a clear development trend for the well-known challenges of housing and private transport is not evident. Whilst positive trends can be seen in the expansion of renewable energies and infrastructure (SDGs 7 & 9) and in regard to industry and employment (SDG 8), the indicators in the sectors of health (SDG 3), reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and life on land (SDG 15) reveal old and new problems. There are also differences to be seen between various types of municipality: large cities generally saw better development in finances (SDG 16), which has a notable impact on the scope for sustainability activities. Greater progress on gender equality (SDG 5) was ultimately achieved by the municipalities in more rural areas. Small municipalities had more positive development in the education sector (SDG 4). Medium-sized cities and urban districts outside the large urban centres show the weakest dynamics by comparison across all SDGs. Growing municipalities did comparatively worse on poverty reduction (SDG 1). However, there is still a lack of current data available in order to determine trends for the whole spectrum of sustainability topics, especially in the following important transformation areas: climate protection and biodiversity conservation (SDGs 13, 14, 15), circular economy (SDG 12) and development cooperation (SDG 17).

## **Involvement of municipalities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

**What can be done better?** “Community tasks” are best tackled together. Right now, effective interlinking on many topics between the national, sub-national and municipal levels does not always occur. Being allocated tasks without resources leaves municipalities facing structural imbalances, with individual municipalities not always managing to find sustainable solutions in a worst case scenario. A fresh start is what is needed here! Public investment at the municipal level is the key for efficient and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Municipalities need to receive the appropriate level of financial resources so that they are able to act. Municipal involvement is also necessary, because there are goal conflicts in the 2030 Agenda which are inherent to the system and must hence be balanced out at the municipal level. Goal conflicts result in contradictory actions being taken. Achieving one goal jeopardises progress on another goal. How can the infrastructure for mobility be improved or affordable housing be created with the least possible encroachment on available land? How can the share of renewables in the energy mix be increased without jeopardising the goal of affordable energy? These conflicts of goals must be ironed out at the municipal level. Municipalities must therefore be included in the continuation of the **2030 Agenda beyond** process comprehensively and at an early stage

**German Culture Council, Green Culture,  
Association for Cultural Policy**

**| How Germany promotes education for better social participation**

**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – culture as a positive example**

**SDG 1:**

**End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

Very many artists earn well below the average income in Germany – despite having a higher-than-average level of education. Many artists therefore face precarious living conditions. In some federal states, minimum wages must be paid in some branches of the arts when public funding is involved. In October 2022, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Culture, together with the German Culture Council (*Deutscher Kulturrat* – DKR), which is the umbrella organisation of all the federal cultural associations, agreed on a remuneration matrix that is now being implemented by the federal states. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) declared in July 2024 that, for projects with at least 50% state funding, payment of a minimum wage to artists is a requirement for awarding commissions or projects. The same also applies in the case of artists who are commissioned by institutionally funded institutions.

**SDG 4:**

**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

The German Culture Council has been actively committed to strengthening cultural education for decades. In the years from 2022 to 2024, the Council and the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Disabled Persons conducted a dialogue process with organisations from the culture sector and with associations and advocacy groups representing people with disabilities. This process culminated in a set of recommendations on participation and inclusion in the culture sector: “Culture needs inclusion – inclusion

needs culture”. The recommendations identify the action that must be taken so that people with disabilities have adequate opportunities to access cultural education as well as vocational and higher education for cultural and artistic professions.

The Green Culture contact point (GCA), funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, guarantees high-quality education through active knowledge-sharing and knowledge-building for everyone in the culture sector. The offer ranges from free digital advisory services and knowledge formats to in-person thematic workshops across Germany. In cooperation with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK), more than 500 transformation managers for sustainable culture have been trained and certified since 2021.

**SDG 5:**

**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

Although the majority of students doing a vocational training course or a degree leading to a qualification in the arts are female, women are still under-represented in leadership positions in the culture and media sector. In order to counter this imbalance and boost qualified women, the DKR has a mentoring programme specifically for women aiming towards a leadership role working in the arts. The mentees are accompanied for 6 months by an experienced senior manager. In addition, further training events are offered. The mentors offer their services to the mentoring programme free of charge, thereby supporting the next generation of senior management.

Furthermore, the German Culture Council continuously conducts studies in which it addresses this topic empirically. The most recent study, “*Baustelle Geschlechtergerechtigkeit*” (Gender equality, a work in progress) was published in 2023.

#### **SDG 11:**

##### **Sustainable cities and communities**

In Germany it is mainly municipal authorities that are responsible for cultural policy and for organising cultural events. From 2020 to 2022, therefore, the cultural policy association KuPoGe (*Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft*), a network bringing together around 1,500 people and organisations who are interested and engaged in matters of cultural policy, carried out – with financial support from the BKM – the project “sustainable and climate-smart cultural policy in Germany” with a view to analysing how the municipalities as the main actors in the field of cultural policy are responding to the challenges of climate change. The findings of the research project then fed into a set of “suggestions and recommendations for action for cultural policy in practice”.

#### **SDG 12:**

##### **Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

The cultural and creative industry is a driver of innovation in terms of sustainable products and sustainable production methods. There is sustainable fashion, sustainable design, sustainable production of books and many other examples. The associations from each branch of the industry provide information about new developments and standards to be met, showcase trends and support their respective branches in transforming their way of working.

In “*Sprint 20*”, a project supported by the BKM, specially trained energy consultants assisted cultural institutions in identifying and implementing energy efficiency measures. Thanks to the project, it has been possible to achieve an average reduction in energy costs of 21.4%.

#### **SDG 13:**

##### **Climate action measures**

Through knowledge-sharing and -building, networking, data collection and advice, the Green Culture contact point supports the ecological transformation of the culture sector. It also assists cultural institutions to use the country-wide, culture-specific KBK & KBK+ carbon accounting standard and the related free tool from the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder*. This is accompanied by the development of specific measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

#### **SDG 17:**

##### **Partnerships for the Goals**

Effective cultural policy is always a question of networking. That is especially true when it comes to exploring the global sustainable development goals and putting them into operation. With that objective in its sights and with financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, the KuPoGe has founded a partnership association with the Cultural Policy Lab, the *Oeko-Institut* and 2N2K (the network for sustainability in art and culture). The aims of the resulting Germany-wide initiative Culture4Climate include highlighting the importance of culture as a component of a transformative environmental policy and identifying pertinent action ideas for a transformative cultural and environmental policy. The findings were communicated to a wide audience via print and social media.

The *Aktionsnetzwerk Nachhaltigkeit in Kultur und Medien* (action network for sustainability in culture and media) supported by the BKM brings together under one roof 64 of the most important German cultural institutions from all areas of the cultural sector, from the television broadcaster ARD to the Zeppelin Museum.

Germany's Third Voluntary National Review (VNR)  
to the HLPF 2025

**PUBLISHED BY THE**

German Federal Government

**AS AT**

June 2025

**DESIGN AND LAYOUT**

Atelier Hauer + Dörfler GmbH, 10117 Berlin

**PHOTO CREDITS**

Graphic elements: shutterstock.com

