



Press release, 21 March 2018

### **“Sustainability First”: Stakeholders call for paradigm shift in the next EU budget**

*Various stakeholders, working together in the European Commission’s multi-stakeholder platform [\*] on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), call on the European Commission to mainstream sustainable development into the funding priorities and decision making mechanisms around the future EU budget. Their recommendations were handed over to First Vice-President Timmermans on 20 March, reminding him that the EU budget should ultimately serve the wellbeing of the people instead of being seen as a zero sum game among EU Member States.*

This short and ambitious report uniquely brings together the views of a broad range of stakeholders, representing civil society organisations from environment, social, human rights and development fields, academic institutions, businesses, trade unions, as well as individual members. The report takes an innovative and much needed holistic approach to European policy making.

Currently the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period post-2020 is intensively debated on the highest political level between the European Commission, the national governments and the European Parliament. This MFF – presumably running until 2027 – presents a unique opportunity to underpin the EU’s efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The failure to make it happen would have far reaching consequences for Europe – not only breaching its international commitments, but also risking a positive vision for the common European future.

The European Commission’s multi-stakeholder platform first of all sees the need for much more policy coherence to have effective and efficient spending. The report therefore proposes a set of instruments to make the future budget more sustainable. Putting the ‘think sustainability first’ principle into the heart of decision making through the better regulation agenda, which was also proposed by the High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance, is one of the recommendations.

Raphael Weyland, lead rapporteur of the MFF report and representative of BirdLife Europe, states: *“For the future, sustainability should become the guiding principle and main priority for the European Commission. Unsustainable EU spending such as agricultural subsidies that are harmful to the environment or fossil infrastructure subsidies that are harmful to the climate needs to be ended.”* Leida Rijnhout from SDG Watch Europe adds: *“With the ongoing MFF debate, the EU has now the unique opportunity to make the future budget sustainability proof. This will be the last chance for the current European Commission and Parliament to turn commitment into action and to coherently implement the 2030 Agenda to achieve the SDGs.”* Andrea Kohl, acting Director of the WWF European Policy Office, concludes: *“The next budget will be a litmus test of the EU’s willingness to deliver on its international commitments on climate, environment, biodiversity and sustainable development.”*

Notes to editors:

[\*] The multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the SDGs (SDGs MSP) was set up by the European Commission to support and advise the Commission on the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It is chaired by First Vice-President Timmermans and involves 30 members from CSOs, businesses, trade unions, academic institutions, individual experts, as well as eight observers. The SDGs MSP is supported by the office of the Secretariat General.

For details on the platform see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en)

Six members of the platform abstained from taking an opinion on its MFF report: COPA COGECA, BusinessEurope, Mella Frewen (Food Drink Europe), the Committee of the Regions, Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

The report is published on the European Commission's website:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/adopted-position-paper-on-the-mff\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/adopted-position-paper-on-the-mff_en.pdf)