

12 October 2017, Maastricht, The Netherlands

# 25th EEAC Annual Conference Towards the 2030 Agenda and beyond: European cooperation within a new citizens-science-policy interface



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ARNAU QUERALT BASSA  
CHAIR OF THE EEAC NETWORK





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# Preface

Do you remember 1992? For me, it was the year I decided to study Environmental Sciences in Barcelona. I have distinct memories of hearing the news of the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. This event marked the start of the European Union, and provided a major impulse for European environmental policy.

Now, 25 years later, Europe can look back on many environmental successes. Yet, a large number of issues remain. How can the EU and its member states press ahead on the road to a sustainable Europe? Like many other organisations, the EEAC network is challenged by the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the present political and societal atmosphere, and the changing interface between science, policy and society.

On 12 October 2017, some 120 scientists, practitioners, policy-makers and young people from all over Europe came together in Maastricht, The Netherlands, to discuss these challenges. They met at the 25th EEAC Annual Conference: 'Towards the 2030 Agenda and beyond: European cooperation within a new citizens-science-policy interface'.

The conference offered renewed inspiration for European cooperation that goes beyond borders, silos and institutional barriers. In this magazine, we share our discussions and results with you. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Arnau Queralt Bassa  
Chair of the EEAC network



*'As a network we will never walk alone'*

*Arnau Queralt Bassa*

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WRAP-UP





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Wrap-up

# From Maastricht to 2030: the road ahead for Europe

**'This conference comes 25 years after the 1992 Rio Conference, where we really started moving on topics such as climate change and sustainable development. And we have come a long way. We have seen more progress than we sometimes allow ourselves to believe, because there is still an awful lot to do.'** Those were the words of **Miranda Schreurs**, vice-chair of the **EEAC**, in her closing speech at the **2017 EEAC conference**.

## Remaining hurdles

So what are the remaining challenges on the road to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals? According to Dirk Messner, director of the German Development Institute, a major task is to create a culture of inclusiveness and social cohesion as a precondition for any sustainability strategy. 'We should mobilise creativity and imagination to

*'The world is ours to change'*

*Miranda Schreurs*

bring stability to people's perspectives when they look into the future.'

### Achieving the SDGs in a changing political and societal climate

In the light of the present political and social atmosphere, how can Europe address the sustainability challenges? The EU needs a strategy on sustainable development, said Gilles Gantelet, director of policy at the European Commission. The 2030 Agenda is only a framework. 'Existing EU policies should be linked to the SDGs.'





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## 'We need fewer speeches, fewer beautiful words, and more actions'

Gilles Gantelet



## 'Without mobilization there will be no implementation.'

Christina Gallach

### Implications for the science-policy-society interface

How can the EEAC member councils – positioned at the interface between science and policy – contribute to achieving the SDGs? The main conclusion of the panel discussion on this question is that advisory councils should become involved in the process of connecting with society. Since they often consist of both stakeholders and scientists, they are in a unique position to do so. Science should be for and with society, and maintain a dialogue with society.

This process needs to be fuelled by inspiring stories and inspiring goals. 'Let's put a man on the moon,' one of the panellists said. Or in sustainability terms: let's set inspiring goals like a plastic-free Europe or a climate-resilient Europe.

### Address the EU

During the conference, an audience member raised the question: 'Should our councils more often address the EU with their advice?' Definitely, said Tomas Vanheste, journalist and

columnist at the conference. 'Because the EU is where the action happens. Or should I say: where the action can happen, if you kick them a little bit more?'



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KNOWS EVERYTHING  
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TRUST IN EACH  
OTHER?

KNOWING OTHERS  
LOOK UP TO US,  
HOW CAN EUROPE  
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# Interviews

1. How can the 2030 Agenda best be implemented given the current political and societal climate?

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2. What do you regard as the biggest obstacle(s) to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

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3. How can you (or your organisation, council or committee) contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

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4. Do you have any personal recommendations for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? To whom would you want to give these recommendations?

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# SPEECHES

DIRK MESSNER  
*GERMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE*  
GILLES GANTELET  
*EUROPEAN COMMISSION*





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# 'A culture of inclusiveness is a precondition for any sustainability strategy'

*Dirk Messner,  
German Development Institute*

**The 2030 Agenda strongly reflects European thinking, Dirk Messner of the German Development Institute demonstrated elegantly in his speech. Willy Brandt is there, with his ideas from the eighties about a global government. Gro Harlem Brundtland is there, with the paradigm of sustainability. And look at the ideas of a social contract on transformation, which were first expressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 18th century. This all means that implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Europe is both a huge opportunity and a challenge.**

**Protagonists of a sustainable Europe**  
 'So how do we position ourselves in this transformation?' Messner wonders.

*Dirk Messner has been Director of the German Development Institute (DIE) since 2003. He is also Co-Chair of the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU).*

One can certainly take a positive view. Messner: 'The work of our European community is a success story. It took only four decades to make sustainability a very important concept, adopted by the UN. We are not slow, we are fast and we are influential. And the elements to make the change happen are there. The technologies exist, the necessary financial mechanisms are known. We can indeed become the protagonists of a sustainable Europe.'





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### Social turbulence

Are there no hurdles left? The sceptical view is that we need scale and we need to accelerate. But even more importantly, Messner states, is that we need to link the discussion on the sustainability transformation to that other transformation which is going on, reflected by the present socio-political turbulence (Brexit, Trump, etc.). This transformation is driven by the dynamics between the winners and losers of globalisation, by people feeling that things are becoming

uncontrollable, by the crisis of elites, by the crisis of identity.

### Creating futures!

Messner presents bold and confrontational solutions to his audience. First of all, we need to attach much more importance to inclusiveness and social cohesion, he argues. In this kind of transformation, people's mind-sets are challenged in a very profound way. 'We should mobilise creativity and imagination to bring stability to people's

*'We need to connect nations to Europe and Europe to the rest of the world'*

*Eeva Furman*



perspectives when they look into the future.'

Secondly, we need to tell stories. Faced with xenophobia, the answer is: creating futures! How would we like to live in the 21st century? Technical solutions are necessary, but they are not convincing people. Narratives are.



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*'The biggest hurdle is making the connection between environment and health'*

*Jacqueline McGlade*

Last but not least, Messner urges placing the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world, especially with Africa, centre stage. 'It is a moral crisis that we talk about the refugee problem in Europe'.

The true refugee crisis is in Africa and the Near and Middle East. Europe's future depends on Africa.'

**How could we accept ...?**

We need a moral revolution, Messner concludes. 'The Ghanaian-American

philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has argued that moral revolutions take place when people and societies look back and say 'How could we have accepted that...'. How could we not invest in decarbonisation? Not invest in Africa? Knowing that if we do not do so, we will run into serious problems. We are still not there, but it is possible.'



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# EU needs strategy for sustainable development

*Gilles Gantelet, European Commission*

**There is sufficient support for the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Commission, from bottom to top. However, what is missing is a strategy. We should not only acknowledge all the actions that have been taken, we should also recognize that they are not enough. Those were the words of Gilles Gantelet, director of policy at the European Commission, in his speech at the 25th EEAC conference.**

Gantelet: 'The OECD claims that Europe is at the forefront in implementing the 2030 Agenda. We are on the right path. At the EU level, the environmental dimension of sustainable development is quite strongly developed.'

## Walk the talk

'However, we are only about half-way in implementing our policies on sustainable development. There is still a distance between the objectives and the



*Gilles Gantelet is director of policy at the Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV) at the European Commission. Prior to this, he served as head of the unit 'Sustainable Development Goals Strategy'.*

reality on the ground. This gap needs to be assessed, to define and propose the next steps to be taken', said Gantelet. 'In the words of Jacques Delors: I'm not optimistic, I'm determined.'

'For example, on the topic of waste we can do more. The Commission is trying to lower restriction levels for specific waste dossiers by small percentages.



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At the same time, some Member States are willing to pay huge EU fines rather than solve actual issues related to waste policy. This does not promote sustainability, nor does it positively influence public opinion.'

The social dimension of sustainable development may need additional effort, Gantelet believes. However, he admits there is no role for EU institutions to play here, as the social dimension is a national matter.

### New communication on 2030 Agenda

In 2018, the Commission will publish a new Communication on the 2030 Agenda. Particular attention will be devoted to green financing, the future of the Energy Union, subsidiarity, and better regulation.

Gantelet sees opportunities. 'Just like we did with respect to the climate dossier, which is under pressure in the current political climate, Europe should continue to demonstrate its commitment to the SDGs. This includes explaining the goals

in terms of how they concretely affect the lives of citizens.'

The Commission should better communicate how it is incorporating the SDGs in its mainstream policies, Gantelet continues. 'So far we have only shown the framework. Now we should link existing policies to the SDGs. We have to explain the SDGs, what they mean, what they are about. How do they concretely affect the lives of citizens?'

*'There is a serious gap between what politicians should do and actually do. Don't cheat on future generations!'*

*Jeremy Wates*





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# PANEL DEBATE

MAGDA AELVOET  
FILIPE DUARTE SANTOS  
LOUISE VAN SCHAİK  
FALK SCHMIDT







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# Science with and for society

## Panel debate

**The EEAC member councils should get involved in the process of connecting science and society. While all four panelists of the afternoon session of the EEAC 2017 conference stressed different aspects, this seems to be their shared message. Building bridges with society is key for councils to successfully operate in the present political and societal atmosphere, the panel stressed.**

### A treasure of knowledge

The EEAC councils should realise they are in possession of a treasure of scientific knowledge, said Magda Aelvoet, chair of the Belgian sustainability council. We need to make this treasure available to citizens and society. The councils provide advice to their governments and parliaments, but can also play a more profound role in our societies, including at the local level.

### The panelists:

- **Magda Aelvoet**,  
*chair of the Belgian Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD)*
- **Filipe Duarte Santos**,  
*chair of the Portuguese National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS)*
- **Louise van Schaik**,  
*Head of the Clingendael International Sustainability Centre in The Netherlands*
- **Falk Schmidt**,  
*Science Platform Sustainability 2030, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Germany*

### Start a dialogue

How can connections with local communities be created? It all comes down to dialogue, according to Filipe Duarte Santos, chair of the Portuguese sustainability council CNADS. 'Climate change impacts people, and we need to reach out and explain it to ordinary people, in every-day language that citizens can understand.'

A council like CNADS, where scientists and stakeholders are represented, already has close ties with society.





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## 'The EEAC councils sit on a treasure of knowledge'

Magda Aelvoet

Duarte Santos is positive about the experiences gained with dialogue. 'CNADS invites stakeholders and talks with them as part of our preparations for advisory reports. The reports are treasures of knowledge gained from scientists and society.'

### Involvement of citizens in science

Starting a dialogue may be one thing, dealing with truth claims is another. Should we tackle these claims by using reason or by opinions and belief systems, wondered panelist Falk Schmidt

of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, Germany.

Schmidt: 'The challenge is to connect to citizens' perceptions, while at the same time not losing the credibility of science. Science is neither neutral, nor can it replace policy. Scientists need to be independent in order to fulfil their roles, which include critical reflection and pushing for action. Independence, however, does not mean working in isolation. Citizens need to be involved in science, in addressing the issues and formulating the questions.' The EEAC councils are well-positioned to play a role in this process of connecting science and society, Schmidt concludes.

### Putting a man on the moon

Citizen involvement in science should be fueled by inspiration, according to Louise van Schaik of the Clingendael International Sustainability Centre. 'Have you heard about the solar car races in Australia? In the Netherlands people certainly have. Three Dutch universities were involved and the media coverage was massive. People of all ages were fascinated by what science and



*'Why not set goals like a plastic-free Europe or a climate-resilient Europe?'*

Louise van Schaik





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technology can achieve. Science makes a difference! Communicating these achievements is very important for inspiration and awareness-raising, and also an inspiration for policy.'

We need to acknowledge the importance of concrete goals like putting a man on the moon, Van Schaik continues. 'Why not set goals like a plastic-free Europe or a climate-resilient Europe? We need inspirational missions to get people involved. Advisory councils and think-tanks will only

become increasingly important, as translation mechanisms are crucial to the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda.'

*'We need to reach out and explain climate change to ordinary people'*

*Filipe Duarte Santos*

*'The challenge is to connect to citizens' perceptions, while at the same time not losing the credibility of science'*

*Falk Schmidt*





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# COLUMN 'DO WHATEVER IT TAKES'

TOMAS VANHESTE





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# Do whatever it takes

*Tomas Vanheste*

'Where are we in the discussion? How do we position ourselves in the debate about the future of Europe?'

Dirk Messner raised those two questions in his thought-provoking speech this morning.

And because questions deserve an answer, I'll try to answer them. I will do so by addressing Sustainable Development Goal no.13, which is concerned with climate action, as well as a very important piece of European legislation in this field: the Effort Sharing Regulation.

'I will do whatever it takes to defend and implement it.'

That is what Miguel Arias Cañete, EU Commissioner for Energy and Climate Action, said about the Paris Agreement in a speech during the EU Sustainable Energy Week,

*Tomas Vanheste (1968) is a Europe specialist at De Correspondent, an online Dutch platform for journalism.*



which was held in Brussels in June of this year.

These were, of course, symbolic words. Arias Cañete was referring to Mario Draghi, the President of the European Central Bank, who during the financial crisis spoke the famous words "The ECB is ready to do whatever it takes to preserve the euro. And believe me, it will be enough."

I'm not an economist, but I think that I'm on the safe side if I say that we now,

five years later, can say with some confidence that Draghi did enough and that the euro will survive.

But what about the Paris Agreement? What does it mean when Arias Cañete says that he will do whatever it takes to defend and implement it?

[Read the column online >](#)



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# PAPER 'TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ON'

DAVID BALDOCK





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## Twenty-five years on: Progressing the sustainable development and environmental agenda in the EU and the role of the EEAC network

*David Baldock*



*David Baldock is a widely recognised authority on European environmental and sustainable development policies, and the former director of the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), a sustainability think-tank based in Brussels and London.*

By any measure, the EU is at the forefront of both thinking and action on the environmental and sustainable development agenda and has actively built this position over the last quarter century.

In his paper, David Baldock reviews the period from 1992 until the present. He reflects on some of the major themes and concepts, drivers and constraints, and the players involved. Most visible amongst those players are of course the European institutions, national and

regional governments, NGOs and lobbies. Of special interest, however, is an informal network first established in 1993: the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC).

[Read the paper online >](#)

*'The EEAC and its national member councils should have the courage to be challenging, on the basis of evidence'*

*David Baldock*



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# Young people about a sustainable Europe

How do young people view a sustainable Europe in 2030? Youth representatives from all over Europe were invited to share their views.

They held a pre-conference on Wednesday 11 October 2017. On Thursday, they pitched their joint vision and participated in the debates. To prepare for the conference, they have written essays and produced vlogs.



Go to vlogs





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# Pitch youth delegates in five big questions

 [Go to pitch](#)

## Question 2 If we want to reach the SDGs what can you do on a social and a personal level?



## Question 1 Knowing others look up to us, how can Europe become a true role model?



## Question 4 What concrete steps have you taken to include youth in your decision-making?



## Question 3 Knowing no-one knows everything, how can we increase trust in each other?

## Question 5 Do we as EEAC have added value? And what is this added value?



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# Youth representatives *essays, vlogs and blog*

## Belgium

*Herlinde Baeyens / Anne Sophie Dubrux*

'The 2030 Agenda could be a timely opportunity to re-evaluate the decision-making architecture of the EU to make it more efficient, inclusive and participatory.'

- [Essay: Europe towards the 2030 Agenda and beyond: the viewpoint of the Belgian youth](#)
- [Vlog: What are Europe's biggest challenges](#)
- [Vlog: What is needed for a more sustainable Europe](#)
- [Vlog: What kind of Europe do you want](#)



## Catalonia

*Andrea Davila Brindley / Angela Delgado Castillo / Lluís Godo*

'Gender equality is an international priority because the proper inclusion of women in society is likely to lead to economic progress and greater support and quicker adoption of sustainability policies.'

- [Essay: Proposals from Catalonia for a Sustainable Europe: The 2030 Agenda and beyond](#)
- [Blog: Angela Delgado Castillo](#)
- [Vlog](#)

## France

*Audrey De Murge / Simon De Ridder*

'A sustainable Europe is not just a matter of economics and good insight. Now we have to take into account climate change, energy progress and pollution.'

- [Essay: In your opinion, what should a Sustainable Europe look like in 2030?](#)





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# Germany

*Jasmin Burgermeister / Dominik Naab*

'We regard social inequality among and within European countries as one of the most pressing issues of our time.'

[▶ Essay by the youth representatives from Germany](#)

# Hungary

*Anna Enesei / István Márk /  
Zsuzsa Pálfi / Veronika Szkiba*

'Since the economy-ecology-society model would make Europe sustainable by 2030, we have to further develop this win-win-win model.'

[▶ Essay: Shared responsibility towards our planet](#)

[▶ Vlog: Anna Enesei](#)

'Each stakeholder can define the concept of sustainability according to its interests. This is the biggest challenge when implementing a Sustainable Europe.'

[▶ Essay: for the 25th EEAC Annual Conference](#)

'The most urgent actions required to realise a sustainable Europe concern human and social aspects, such as the migration crisis, population ageing, and the lack of acknowledgement of climate change.'

[▶ Essay: Sustainable Europe 2030](#)

'We use money to measure our wealth, but this metric ignores the priceless values of nature and human relationships, which are the true sources of wealth and well-being.'

[▶ Essay: My Europe](#)

[▶ Vlog: Zsuzsa Palfi](#)





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# Ireland

Amy Colgan / Ornella Nana

'We hope to see a Europe that is representative of all identities, merging into one European identity, offering space for inclusion and acceptance of different people from various backgrounds.'

[▶ Essay: Sustainable Development Essay for National Economic and Social Council, Ireland \(NESC\) and EEAC Annual Conference 2017](#)



# Montenegro

Aida Drpljanin / Jovana Otašević

'The SDGs for Quality Education and Partnerships for Goals are key to the solution for achieving sustainable development.'

[▶ Essay: Sustainable Europe in 2030 – Montenegro](#)



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# The Netherlands

*Sybre Bosch / Mart Lubben /  
Ingrid Odegard*

'Key to making the required change in system characteristics is the inclusion of external costs (for example the costs of climate change and biodiversity loss) in all business and consumer transactions.'

- [Essay: On the origin of a sustainable Europe](#)
- [Vlog: Mart Lubben](#)
- [Vlog: Ingrid Odegard](#)

# Portugal

*Daniela Casimiro / João Grilo*

'While trying to make progress on sustainable development, we also need to close the gap between the global north and south, based on solutions with a smaller toll on the environment.'

- [Essay: How to achieve a sustainable Europe by 2030](#)





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