



Introduction to the SDG Course Series

University of Applied Sciences Burgenland





Frames for sustainability



Main goal of the SDGs: transformation of our world through the Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries — developed and developing — in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth — all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



What is sustainability?

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
— Brundtland Report, 1987

Source: we.are.admin.ch.



Did you know that coined in German, the original term was Nachhaltigkeit, meaning “sustained yield.” It first appeared in a handbook of forestry published in 1713, and was used to mean never harvesting more than the forest can regenerate. The translated term appeared in English beginning in the mid-19th century.

Source: theworldenergyfoundation.org



“Hm...this definition of sustainability is older than me. How come we are only now acting upon it? How would our challenges be different today had we listened to the scientists then?”

What are the political frameworks for sustainability?



- 193 UN member states agreed in 2015, as a global community, to the Agenda 2030 for reaching systemic sustainability in the world – known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – they supersede the Millennium goals that focused only on developing countries.
- Embedded in the SDGs is also the Paris Agreement, also agreed upon in 2015 through COP21, for limiting global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels – connects to a number of SDGs, especially SDG 13.

Sources: un.org and unfccc.int



Did you know that there are 17 SDGs with 107 sub goals and 62 suggested measures, as well as 231 indicators to track and measure the outcomes of sustainability actions?

Source: un.org

"I wonder what it takes for countries to follow up on these agreements made in 2015. In my own country, many people haven't yet even heard about the SDGs or the Paris Agreement, much less know what they mean. What's up with that?"



What is the Green Deal?



The Green Deal is Europe's action plan for the Paris Agreement. Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal will transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring:

- no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place left behind

Source: ec.europa.eu

"I recently learned that climate neutrality means creating a balance between carbon emissions and the uptake of carbon from the atmosphere in carbon sinks. In order to achieve net zero emissions, all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide must be offset by carbon sequestration. A system that absorbs more carbon than it gives off is called a carbon sink. The most important natural carbon sinks are soils, forests and oceans."

Source: europarl.europa.eu

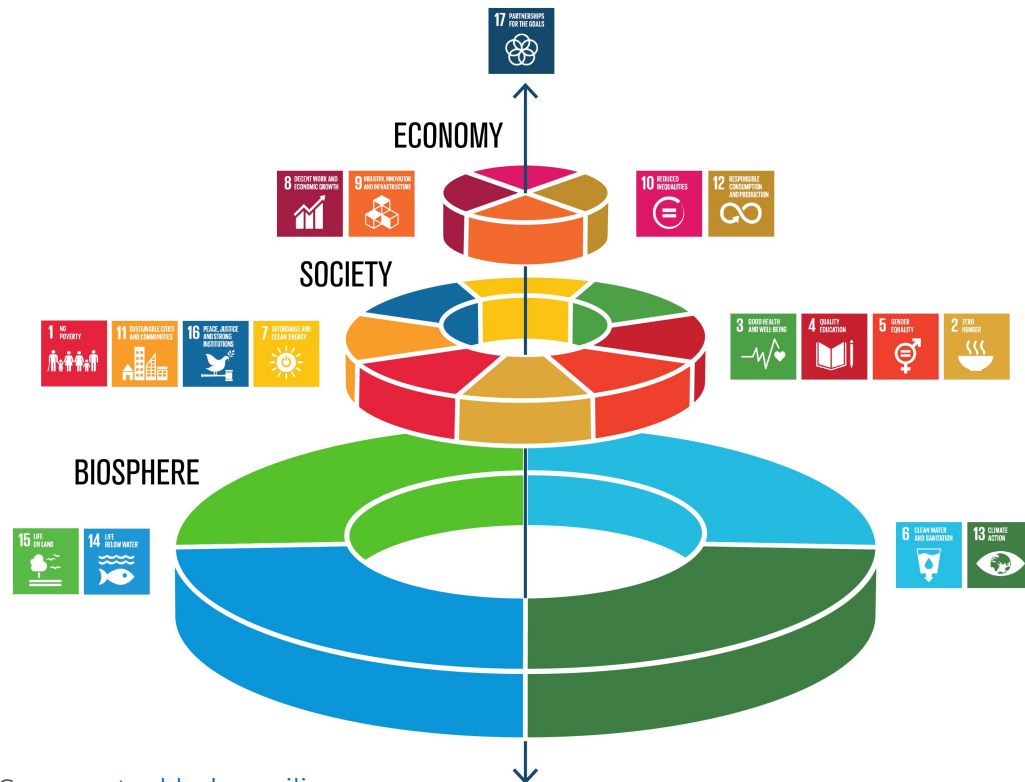


Did you know that just recently the European Commission issued their legislative package proposal "Fit for 55" to make the EU's climate, energy, land use, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (compared to 1990 levels)?

Source: ec.europa.eu



How is it all connected? Model: "wedding cake"



Source: stockholmresilience.org

Graphics by Jerker Lokrantz/Azote



Did you know that there are several models for organizing the SDGs? This one here demonstrates the hierarchies that determine what can happen in the world. All SDGs are interlinked, relate to economy and society, and are embedded in those that concern the biosphere – just as life works in complex nested interrelationships. Understanding these hierarchies is foundational to designing impactful solutions for sustainability; it also shows that partnerships for the achievement of the SDGs lie at the center of it all –because no country can achieve the SDGs alone!





Managing sustainability



Steps to manage sustainability

- Step 1: develop sustainability strategy with strategic and operational goals
- Step 2: develop and act upon implementation plan to realize, track, and measure goals (including audits and certifications)
- Step 3: report on achievement of goals
- Step 4: revisit sustainability strategy frequently, adjust goals as needed

Note: important = to continuously watch for emergence and respond to changing dynamics in a timely manner
 needed = an understanding of system dynamics to embody highest degree of flexibility for acting upon emerging patterns



Sustainability strategy & implementation

Some principles, methods and tools to use:

For organizations of all kinds, including municipalities:

- Global Compact: unglobalcompact.org/sdgs
- SDG Compass: sdgcompass.org
- Circular Economy: ellenmacarthurfoundation.org
- Economy for the Common Good: ecogood.org and ecogood.org/apply-ecg/common-good-matrix/
- B-Corp: bcorporation.net
- RespACT: respact.at

For educational institutions:

- PRME: unprme.org



Sustainability audits & certifications



Some possibilities for organizations of all kinds, including municipalities and educational institutions:

Globally:

- ISO Standards: [iso.org](https://www.iso.org)
- Economy for the Common Good Balance Audit: [ecogood.org](https://www.ecogood.org)

Europe:

- EMAS Certification: ec.europa.eu and [tuv.com](https://www.tuv.com)

Austria:

- Austrian Standards: [austrian-standards.at](https://www.austrian-standards.at)
- ONR 192500: [qualityaustria.com](https://www.qualityaustria.com)
- Ecolabel: [umweltzeichen.at](https://www.umweltzeichen.at)



Sustainability reporting

Some possibilities for organizations of all kinds, including municipalities and educational institutions:

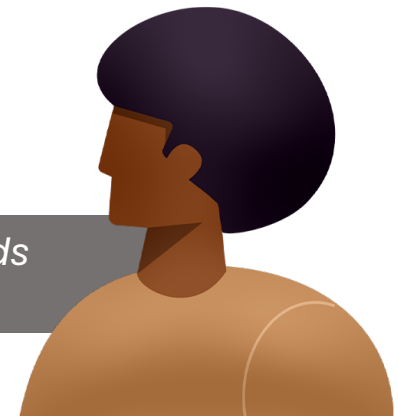
Globally:

- Global Reporting Initiative: [globalreporting.org](https://www.globalreporting.org)

Europe:

- Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)
 - as of 2022 use new directive: ec.europa.eu

"I find it hard to keep all these different frameworks, methods and tools apart. What do I really need to get started?"



Indicator trends for monitoring of progress towards the SDGs in an EU context



Global partnership		
	Official development assistance	
	EU financing to developing countries	
	EU imports from developing countries	
Financial governance within EU		
	General government gross debt	
	Share of environmental taxes in total tax revenues	

Legend:

	Indicator with quantitative target (Click the icon to download the indicator targets). In this case, the arrow should be interpreted according to the left-hand column below, for all other indicators according to the right-hand column below.	
	Significant progress towards EU target	Significant progress towards SD objectives
	Moderate progress towards EU target	Moderate progress towards SD objectives
	Insufficient progress towards EU target	Moderate movement away from SD objectives
	Movement away from EU target	Significant movement away from SD objectives
:	Calculation of trend not possible (for example, time series too short)	

Source: ec.europa.eu





**Designing for
sustainability**

Before designing contributions for different kinds of organizations...

- Imagine an organization (business).
What is the core purpose of this organization*?
- Who are this organization's internal and external stakeholders?
- How does "SDGx" impact it (its purpose, its stakeholders, its operation, its viability)?
- What challenges and/or costs emerge for this organization for this impact?
- On the other hand, what opportunities and/or benefits arise?
- With all this in mind, what contributions** might this organization make to reach SDGx within its sphere of influence via inward and outward actions?

* Meant here are all sizes, all types

** Consider contributions inside the organization (referring to everything that is a resource to the organization and is directly or indirectly controlled by the organization, for instance, human resources, know how, monetary and material resources) and the outside of the organization (referring to everything outside of the organization that it can influence but lies outside of its control, for instance, policy change, partnering with other organizations, etc...)





Activity: designing actions...

The purpose of xyz organization is to...

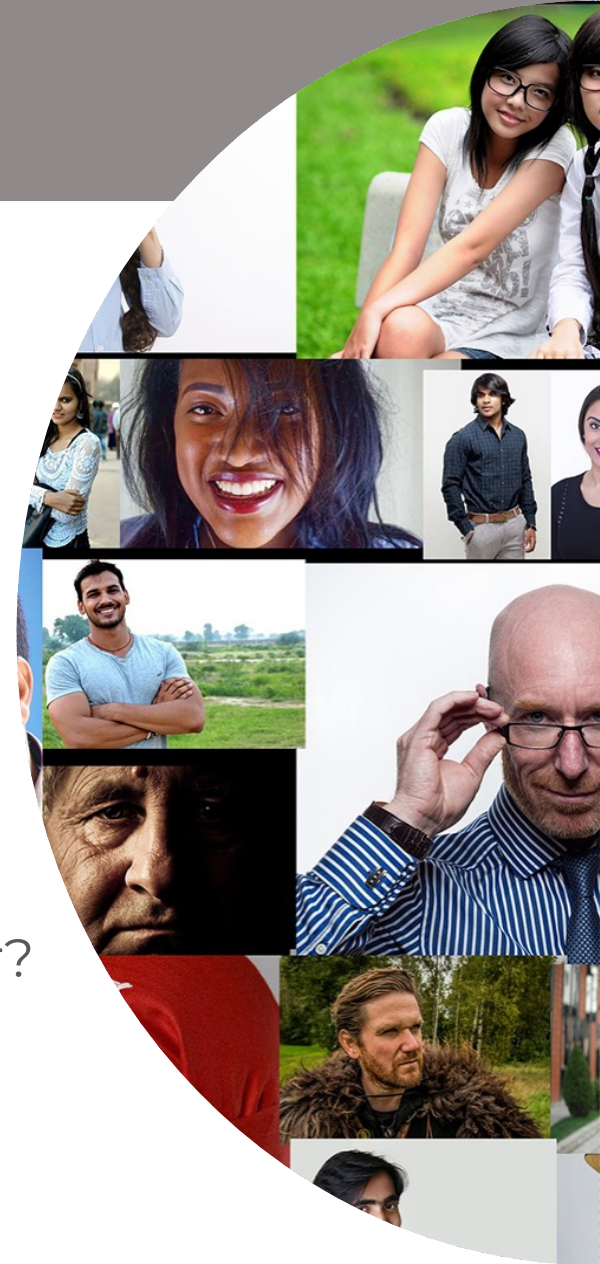
In terms of SDG x, the tasks for this organization might be:

Potential inward actions:

Potential outward actions:

How do inward and outward actions interact and impact each other?

Are partnerships necessary for the desired impact?





Activity: checking design of potential contributions

Returning to the opening questions:

- In which ways do the designed actions support the core purpose of xyz organization?
- In which ways do the designed actions serve the internal and external stakeholders of xyz organization?
- What balance between costs vs. benefits (or challenge vs. opportunity) can be noticed for xyz organization for participating and collaborating on the fulfillment of the SDGs?
- How do the designed inward and outward actions cohere and create synergy for xyz impact?





**Reflection and
resources
SDG journey**

Reflection and some resources

- When have you first heard about the SDGs?
- How do the SDGs relate to your life?
- How can you realize the SDGs in your work?
- Who should be responsible for realizing the SDGs in your country?
- What should happen if the SDGs are not met?
- How old will you be in 2030, 2050, and at the end of the century?
- If you could choose, what kind of world do you want to live in? In which SDGs are your visions best embedded?

Further Infos:

- [SDG-definition of the UN](#)
- [Global Report 2021](#)
- [Fit for 55 Package \(EU Parliament\)](#)



More resources

Books:

- Nachhaltige Entwicklung – Sustainable Development Was ist Nachhaltige Entwicklung? Ulrich Holzbaur Aalen, Baden-Württemberg, Deutschland
- Holzbaur, Ulrich. Nachhaltige Entwicklung Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. Kindle Edition.
- for organizations: iufe.at
- for municipalities: iufe.at and iufe.at
- for children & youth: iufe.at and bildung2030.at
- for personal contributions: iufe.at
- for regeneration: regeneration.org

- [IUFE book publications](#)
- [IUFE reviews](#)
- [IUFE digital congress 2020](#)
- [IUFE Digital marketplace for climate initiatives](#)
- [IUFE project “Our world in the 21st century”](#)
- [IUFE “Human rights and the 2030 Agenda”](#)
- [MIT study about the collapse of society](#)
- [Monitoring SDGs by country](#)
- [Some key findings](#)
- [SDG country scores](#)
- [Podcast](#)





Activity: SDG journey

- > Put your SDG glasses on and observe your environment under the SDGx umbrella for a week. Look for xyz, mitigations, violations, new possibilities.
 - > If appropriate and allowed, take pictures of the found circumstances and catalogue the photos (begin making a scrapbook) – they will lead to a final assignment at the end of the series. Before you venture out, it might be a good idea to inform yourself about legal responsibilities when taking photos of people: [oesterreich.gv.at](https://www.oesterreich.gv.at) (If you are not in Austria, look for the regulations of the respective country!)
- Possible resource for online scrapbook (free for classrooms and non-profits): [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)





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