



SUOMEN KESTÄVÄN  
KEHITYKSEN TOIMIKUNTA  
FINLANDS KOMMISSION  
FÖR HÅLLBAR UTVECKLING  
FINNISH NATIONAL COMMISSION  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
GOVERNMENT OFFICE

## • THE VNR'S OF ESTONIA AND FINLAND •

JOINT SEMINAR OF ESTONIAN AND FINNISH  
NATIONAL COMMISSIONS

*Time: Tuesday 19.5.2020 10.00-12.20*

*Teams webinar*

### **Opening words & welcome**

Annika Lindblom, Secretary General of NCSD, Finland & Eili Lepik, Deputy Strategy Director, Government Office of Estonia

Mihkel Annus, Chairman of the Commission for Sustainable Development of Estonia

Annika Lindblom from Finland and Eili Lepik from Estonia warmly welcome everyone to the webinar. Finland and Estonia both report the VNR the second time to UN. The challenge this time is to really provide information on the progress. The reporting process was a bit easier than the first time, but the expectations were also higher. Mihkel Annus from the Commission for Sustainable Development of Estonia also welcomes everyone.

### **VNR processes introduction**

Laura Viilup, Adviser, Government Office of Estonia

Laura Viilup presents the Estonian VNR process. VNR is based on the Government's activity reports, proposals from ministries and Commission for Sustainable Development, and data collected from non-governmental organisations and enterprises. In addition, there was a survey to find out contributions of non-governmental organisations.

Marja Inananen, Chief Officer, PMO Finland

Marja Inananen presents the Finnish VNR process. Whole Government/all ministries were involved in the process and also several important stakeholders wrote some parts of the report. Civil society organizations also assessed the SDGs. Switzerland and Mozambique reviewed the draft report of Finnish VNR.

### **VNR main messages**

Eili Lepik, Deputy Strategy Director, Government Office of Estonia

Eili Lepik presents Estonian main messages. Estonia has no separate implementation plan for SDGs, they are integrated into government's strategies and development plans. A new national strategy 2035 is the basis for implementing the SDGs in strategies. Estonia reports on all SDGs and they have added one more goal (18<sup>th</sup>), which is viability of cultural space. Estonia is on 10<sup>th</sup> place on the 2019 SDG Index. They have composed a special "Indicator Tree" to visualise how the goals are advancing. Estonia's main strengths are high quality education, effective healthcare organisation, high employment rate, high share of renewable energy and extensive access to public services. Key challenges are related to developing an energy and resource efficient economy, lowering CO2 emissions per capita, tackling the gender pay gap and preserving biodiversity. Possible impacts of COVID-19 pandemic are also discussed.

#### Sami Pirkkala, Chief Officer, PMO Finland

Sami Pirkkala presents Finland's main messages. Finland is close to reaching many of the SDGs related to social and economic sustainability. Key challenges are related to consumption and production, climate action, state of biodiversity, gender equality and increasing obesity. Finland's universal social security and service system, as well as good educational opportunities, ensure that no one is left behind. However, persons belonging to a visible minority and persons with disabilities still face discrimination. Legislation and policy actions aim to ensure equal opportunities for all. A sustainability assessment has been integrated into annual cycle of policy planning, budgeting and reporting. The Government and Parliament engage in regular dialogue on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Three cities have prepared Voluntary Local Reviews, and in general the engagement of youth, private sector and cities has increased. Finland will prepare a national 2030 Agenda roadmap in 2021 to support a long-term approach to achieve transformations in sustainability.

## **Youth reflections**

#### Sofia Savonen, Co-Chair of the 2030 Agenda Youth Group of Finland

Sofia Savonen thanks Finland and Estonia for taking effort to include civil society organisations and other stakeholders to the VNR process. To reach the SDG targets, we have to empower the people, especially the youth, to actively take part in the process. The Finnish Agenda2030 Youth Group has been working with the Expert panel and the Commission for Sustainable Development since 2017. In the spring of 2020, the Youth Group was recognized in the UN Human Rights Council's report. Savonen wants to encourage both Estonia and Finland to ensure the active participation of young people by using the existing structures and by innovating new ones.

#### Mikk Tarros, Development Adviser, Estonian National Youth Council

Mikk Tarros describes how the youth of Estonia has contributed to the Estonian 2035 Strategy. He stresses the role of youth unemployment and inclusion of youth in the decision process of future environmental matters. He calls all UN members to invite youth organizations to take part in the implementation of SDGs. More co-operation with local governments is needed, since local democracy is the key in succeeding in the implementation. Transport and education are backbones to reach SDGs.

## **Open discussion**

There is discussion about the role of parliament in Estonia in sustainable development. Parliament's role has diminished after 2015, but they are planning to improve it with a new strategy. Estonia's additional SDG18 is discussed, and how the Estonian language and culture is doing. The accessibility for people with disabilities is discussed and the lack of statistics about people with disabilities is also put in to notice. It is also discussed why Estonian biodiversity has become a challenge, since before it was a strength. There are biodiversity concerns with the amount of forests and CO2 levels.

## **SDG progress participation of civil groups**

Rilli Lappalainen, Director, Advocacy and policy, Fingo, Finland

Fingo organized the civil society's reflections for Finland's VNR report. 57 CSOs were involved. In the report there is a section for all SDGs, one page is for Finnish authorities update on progress and the next page is for civil society reflection on the same goal. The trend of the SDGs was positive in 2, neutral in 8 and negative in 7, according to civil society organisations. Example of positive progress is SDG6 (Water and Sanitation), of neutral progress SDG9 (Sustainable Industry, Innovation and Infrastructures) and of negative progress SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Mihkel Annus, Chairman of the Commission for Sustainable Development of Estonia

Mihkel Annus highlights some challenges in the SDGs mentioned by the civil societies. Challenges mentioned are the wage gap between men and women, development in the efforts towards education and inclusive urban environment. He mentions that the share of people who prefer cars in Tallinn has increased. In the last year, the emissions in Estonia have dropped significantly, but according to Annus, it is due to market conditions. He calls out for more active government.

## **Open discussion**

There is discussion about the role of civil society organizations. Civil society organizations all have different agendas, and have variety of actions and thus different roles. It is mentioned that CSOs need to take a role in the implementation of SDGs, and Finland implementing the CSOs views in the VNR is a good example. Appreciation on the CSOs role as a watchdog is also mentioned.

## **Finnish experiences: Work in Regions and Cities**

Micke Larsson, Development and Sustainability Strategist at Government of Åland

Micke Larsson presents Åland Islands "Everyone can flourish" story. Åland has a pursuit of total sustainable development no later than in 2051. Åland's 4 sustainability principles are also introduced. "Everyone can flourish in a viable society on the islands of peace" summarizes Åland's development goals. Specifically they have set 7 strategic development goals to be reached by 2030. Åland won the European Sustainability Award in 2019 for their Development and Sustainability agenda and the bärkraft.ax initiative.

Ville Taajamaa SDG manager, VLR City Espoo

Ville Taajamaa tells experiences from Espoo's VLR process. Espoo's goal is to be the most sustainable city in Europe. SDGs work as a way to analyse and develop the city's activities. All the

material used in the review came from inside the organization, and workshops were used in the process. Espoo used a phenomenon-based process and their VLR is very future-oriented.

## **Estonian experiences: Cooperation with business**

Agne Kuimet, CEO of Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation

The coalition for Sustainable Development in Estonia is a cross-sectoral coalition, so it has different types of businesses, government institutions and NGOs as its members. The topic of SDGs was not well known a year ago in Estonia. The coalition was developed to raise awareness of SDGs in the society. They did several actions to popularize the SDGs, for example a SDG game which was very popular. Today SDGs are more popularised and well known in Estonia. Many businesses have been implementing SDGs in their actions.

Kristiina Esop, CEO of Estonian Responsible Business Forum

Kristiina Esop presents the Estonian Responsible Business Forum. The Forum is a network of businesses, right now there are 71 enterprises as members. They are advocating responsible business principles and they have co-operated with the ministries. The Forum organizes a national CSR index and try to nationalize the CSR efforts. They also are trying to integrate the SDGs in the CSR index.

## **Open discussion**

Estonian CSR index and evaluators are discussed. The index was created 10 years ago and has been updated every year. It is also discussed how Espoo and Åland started their SDG processes.

## **Conclusion**

Annika Lindblom, Secretary General of NCSD, Finland & Eili Lepik, Deputy Strategy Director, Government Office of Estonia

Annika Lindblom and Eili Lepik thank everyone for their presentations. Co-operation between Estonia and Finland in sustainable development matters will be continued in the future. There is also a short mention about the new normal after Covid19, as the next VNRs are most probably going to be affected by the pandemic.

Present:

Agne Kuimet, Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation  
Annika Lindblom, Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development  
Annina Heini, Kynnys ry  
Annu Lehtinen, Suomen pakolaisapu  
Anu Juvonen, Puolueiden kansainvälinen demokratiayhteistyö Demo ry  
Arja Juvonen, Finnish Parliament  
Egge Kulbok-Lattik, Estonian Culture Chamber NGO  
Eili Lepik, Government Office of Estonia  
Elisa Palminen, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
Jaana Hirsikangas, Suomen UN Women ry  
Jenni Kauppila, Suomen YK-liitto ry  
Jonas Laxåback, Svenska lantbruksproducenternas centralförbund r.f

Kai Klein, Estonian Chamber of Environmental Associations  
Kaie Enno, City government of Narva  
Kalle Toomet, The Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities  
Katri Suomi, Kirkon ulkomaanapu  
Kimmo Tiilikainen, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Finland  
Krista Loogma, NGO Estonian Education Forum  
Kristiina Esop, Estonian Responsible Business Forum  
Laura Viilup, Government Office of Estonia  
Leena Pentikäinen, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Finland  
Liisa Rohweder, WWF Finland  
Mahamed Abdule, Suomen somalialaisten liitto ry  
Marja Innanen, PMO Finland  
Marko Veermets, Rural municipality government of Harku  
Markus Seppelin, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Finland  
Meelis Joost, Estonian Chamber of Disabled People  
Micke Larsson, Ålands landskapsregering  
Mihkel Annus, The Estonian Renewable Energy Association  
Mikael Långström, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
Mikk Tarros, Estonian National Youth Council  
Mikko Salo, Luonnon-, ympäristö- ja metsätieteilijöiden liitto Loimu  
Ott Kasuri, The Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities  
Paavo Tervonen, The Kitchen  
Pasi Laitala, City of Espoo  
Pentti Mäkinen, Etelä-Savon maakuntaliitto  
Pilvi Torsti, PMO Finland  
Rasa Jämsen, PMO Finland  
Riina Pursiainen, PMO Finland  
Rilli Lappalainen, Fingo ry  
Roomet Sormus, The Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce  
Saara Sahinoja, PMO Finland  
Salka Orivuori, Marttaliitto  
Sami Pirkkala, PMO Finland  
Sara Kajander, Ministry of Defence Finland  
Satu Heikkinen, Ministry of Education and Culture Finland  
Satu Santala, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
Sini Räsänen, The Kitchen  
Sofia Savonen, 2030 Agenda Youth Group of Finland  
Sonja Raunio, Nuorten mielenterveysseura - Yeesi ry  
Terhi Toikkanen, Kynnys ry  
Tuomas Aslak Juuso, Sami Parliament Finland  
Tuuli Ojala, Ministry of Transport and Communications Finland  
Tytti Pansar, Suomen Kansanopistoyhdistys (Vapaa sivistystyö ry)  
Vava Lunabba, Ministry of Justice Finland  
Vesa Silfver, Motiva Oy  
Ville Taajamaa, City of Espoo