



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 (18th), which is viability of cultural space. Estonia is on 10th 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