



## 14<sup>TH</sup> ESDN WORKSHOP

# DEVELOPING THE ESDN PEER LEARNING APPROACH TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SD AND THE SDGS

Experiences and needs for peer learning  
and peer review processes

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**Workshop  
Report**

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## Introduction

This ESDN Workshop Report provides information on the inputs, discussions and outcomes of the **14<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop**, entitled “**Developing the ESDN peer learning approach to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs: Experiences and needs for peer learning and peer review processes**”, which took place in **Berlin** on **14 June 2016**, in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

In the context of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 14<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop focused on the topic of **peer learning** applied to policy-making for SD. The ESDN is aiming to establish a peer learning mechanism for national policy-makers to support national policy-makers in their challenging job of implementing the 2030 Agenda for SD. One important cornerstone of this mechanism will be the **yearly ESDN Peer Learning Platform** (the first one in autumn 2016) that will offer policy-makers from all European countries, experts and selected stakeholders the chance to exchange experiences and learn from implementation practice. The **key objectives of the workshop** were, therefore:

- To **develop, together with the workshop participants, the ESDN peer learning approach**, based on experiences on peer learning and peer review in individual countries (e.g. Germany), and drawing also on European practices and examples from international institutions (e.g. OECD, UN);
- To **provide the opportunity to exchange** and discuss the needs of national policy-making with regards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD, and to share experiences and perspectives on how to design policies and processes, and how to link them to national sustainable development strategies.

In total, **54 participants from 17 countries** took part in the workshop that was moderated by Alan AtKisson (AtKisson Group). The workshop was kicked-off by an opening and orientating session, followed by three main sessions:

- **Session 1:** Defining Peer Learning and Peer Reviews: Concept and approaches;
- **Session 2:** National and international examples of Peer Reviews and Peer Learning;
- **Session 3:** Developing the ESDN peer learning approach.

To access the full documentation of the 14<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop, please go to the [ESDN website](#) on which the following documents are available for download: (i) Workshop Agenda; (ii) Discussion Paper; (iii) PPT slides of all keynotes and other presentations, (iv) the participants list, and (v) a photo documentation.

## Opening session

The opening and orientation session included several welcome addresses and provided an overview of the workshop objectives.

**ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER** (ESDN Co-chair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria) welcomed the participants and introduced the focus of the workshop: to develop a peer learning mechanism in support of the implementation of 2030 Agenda for SD in Europe and at the national level. She mentioned how often there was a **shared feeling to wait for the EU level to take action**. And, indeed, several important things have happened at the EU level, such as, for instance, the European

Parliament's resolution in May 2016 that asked for an overarching SD Strategy for EU, or support activities by the EESD SD Observatory towards 2030 Agenda implementation. She also underlined that **important initiatives have been started at the Member States level** and this not only in relation to the voluntary national reports for the HLPF meeting in July 2016. She concluded by highlighting the role of ESDN as a platform for initiatives on the MS level and as a place for learning from each other.

**WOLFRAM TERTSCHNIG** (*ESDN Co-chair, Federal Ministry of agriculture, forestry, environment and water management, Austria*) also welcomed the participants and presented the main outcomes of the ESDN Conference 2015 about the 2030 Agenda and SDG implementation. He then introduced the focus of this ESDN Workshop to **discuss the concept and design of an ESDN peer learning approach** for European countries in their efforts of implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. He continued by highlighting the work that has been done by the ESDN as a network with long-standing experience on peer learning and exchange, mutual learning, and sharing of good practices. He, therefore, stressed that ESDN is feeling confident to develop a Peer Learning Platform as an approach for exchange and learning. He concluded by saying that the ESDN will, based on the outcomes of this workshop, develop an architecture for a Peer Learning approach for the next years with the objective to enable exchange and learning between European countries and stakeholders as a demand-driven approach.

**JÖRG MAYER-RIES** (*Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany*) welcomed the participants on behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and offered several remarks: First, he proposed to leave the political debate about SD governance out of the workshop, although it influenced the current work of policy-makers. He argued that the 2030 Agenda would not require a completely new way of working, as it was still based on a learning and experience process, and saw it as an intensive review process for SD policy in general. Thus, he mentioned that the implementation **of 2030 Agenda should be seen as the continuation of processes** of governance, objectives, and procedures of SD policy that have been existing for some time, although the new Agenda represented an important new impulse. He then underpinned the new Agenda as not an agenda without conflicts, contradictions, or trade-offs. **Review and learning processes would need to acknowledge conflicts and trade-offs.** He continued by saying that, at the moment, the SDGs and the UN agenda were not at the centre of political attention and not even known by well-informed politicians or by the general public. He focused then on Germany's implementation process of the 2030 Agenda as part of a long-term process of work that has been ongoing since decades, and mentioned concepts such as planetary boundaries, change, cooperation, precautionary principle, etc. as challenges addressed in the past, in the present and as challenges for the future. He then said that the new German National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) would take on-board all these concepts. Furthermore, he argued that **a EU architecture for the 2030 Agenda for SD implementation would be helpful for MSs to support their implementation.** He highlighted how a learning process is dependent on exchange and review, and mentioned the extensive consultation and exchange process that took place in Germany over the last months for the new NSDS and its review. Such a process, he said, particularly benefits from an exchange with other countries, for example, on how to operationalize planetary boundaries, international responsibility, etc. He suggested that a **focus on review and learning processes** was needed, together with an operationalization of concepts and approaches on the roles of individual ministries, and the EU, on questions of ownership and participation of stakeholder outside of the state, etc.

**FRANÇOIS WAKENHUT** (*Head of Unit F.1 Resource Efficiency & Economic Analysis, DG Environment, European Commission*) in his keynote about "**Implementing the 2030 Agenda in Europe: Cooperation between EU and national levels in the implementation process**" focused on: (1) trends, (2) peer learning, and (3) EU action. First, he talked about the main **global trends towards 2030** and mentioned a report by the

**European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS)** that highlighted the following trends: (1) The human race is growing older and richer with a growing middle class and widening inequalities; (2) economic weight and political power is shifting to Asia: sustained development of the world economy is becoming more vulnerable to challenges and to weaknesses in the globalisation process; (3) a revolution in technologies and their applications transforms societies in almost every aspect: digitisation is the invader and radical, disruptive change the consequence; (4) managing scarcity of resources becomes an increasing challenge, with rising energy consumption and shifting patterns of production; and, (5) the interdependence of countries, now a fact of global life, is not matched by strengthening global governance. The world order becomes more fragile and unpredictable. With regards to Peer Learning, he mentioned the [ESDN report on peer learning and 2030 Agenda](#) and stressed how the report was able to provide interesting entry points to the debate that should encompass both dimensions of governance and substance. In terms of governance, he mentioned the need to learn from the past to change what may happen in the future, particularly through **policy coherence** as the SDGs are broad and complex and would benefit from overcoming silos-thinking. He mentioned that things were already set in motion and highlighted, as an example, how the **circular economy** has been embraced by traditional growth advocates, also in the Commission. Seemingly crucial, he argued, is the time factor and perspective as many short-term concerns were still dominating the daily policy debate, rather than long-term thinking and systemic approaches. He argued that re-thinking the way work is done inside organizations would be necessary, e.g. how to manage change, how to adapt to challenges, etc., because of the systemic and comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda. He then suggested **peer learning as a means to adapt more efficiently by building on others' experiences**. With respect to EU Action, he outlined the next steps for a *sustainable Europe future* as a new approach to ensure Europe's economic growth and social and environmental sustainability beyond the 2020 timeframe, taking into account the Europe 2020 review, and the internal and external implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. He mentioned that the 2030 Agenda will be included in a new EU strategy. In order to provide an example of creating and implementing a joint agenda, he mentioned the Green Finance agenda in the EU (i.e. capital markets union) as a current way to rethink opportunities and making the financial system more resilient.

In the following **Q&A**, some important topics were mentioned. A representative from the Austrian Chancellery asked to clarify how competitiveness will be addressed by the European Commission in the future work on SD. **FRANÇOIS WAKENHUT** argued that 'competitiveness' was at the heart of the current Commission's programme, and the SD agenda remained a powerful hook to make competitiveness not an agenda per se, but to also make SD part of the competitiveness agenda and thus the agenda stronger. He pointed out that Europe would not only keep its role as leader in fields like clean technology or green economy, but also **define the right approach for competitiveness by basing it on SD criteria**.

## Session 1: Defining Peer Learning and Peer Reviews: Concepts and Approaches

**UMBERTO PISANO** (ESDN Office – Institute for Managing Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business) in his keynote "**Peer Learning: mapping the landscape**" focused on providing a more detailed overview of the goal and context of the workshop, shared the main points raised in the ESDN Workshop Discussion Paper by defining the concept of 'Peer Learning', and gave a summary of the main practical approaches of peer review and peer learning. Firstly, he mentioned the efforts made by the ESDN to establish a new mechanism within the ESDN itself – the ESDN Peer Learning Platform – to support policymakers with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD by creating a new 'space' for exchange and discussion on policies, strategies, coordination, coherence for SD. By presenting the results from the **Dutch EU Presidency workshop** held on the 19 April 2016 on the 2030 Agenda implementation, he provided an overview of the current **implementation activities** by EU MSs, namely (a) assigning responsibilities for different parts of the implementation process (i.e. who is in charge of the overall coordination, who for particular aspects, and who

holds the overarching responsibility; (b) mapping exercises of current policies in relation to the SDGs & targets, or even gap analyses; (c) concrete proposals for decisions on how to adjust national policies to the 2030 Agenda; and (d) move forward together with the EU. Similarities in **challenges** for MS were also discussed at this Presidency meeting: (1) Appropriation by different departments/line ministries; (2) creating awareness and ownership; (3) new instruments or existing mechanisms; and (4) integrated vs. silo approaches. Furthermore, he stressed a message from the ESDN Conference 2015 that shows the need and potential for peer learning as a clear support mechanism in the national implementation process, which was identified as key. Umberto then provided the participants with the first ideas for the **development of an ESDN Peer Learning Platform**: Such a 'platform' could be devoted mainly to national policy-makers of European countries with the aim to exchange experiences and good practices on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs; with a number of **30-40 participants at each workshop, organized once per year** and with a foreseen potential duration of **1 to 1.5 day meeting**. The ESDN Peer Learning Platforms could be preceded or followed by the **ESDN Peer Visits**, hosted by a European country ('host country') for a number of visiting policymakers from other countries ('visiting countries') to exchange experiences and good practices on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs in a more direct way through face-to-face exchange with selected policy-makers and stakeholders from the host country and providing the chance for in-depth exchange. He then explained the concept of Peer Learning and provided a definition: "An umbrella concept that encompasses a number of different mechanisms or instruments that support 'learning' from and with peers with regard to sustainable development". He then stressed how this type of learning was intended as a **mutually beneficial type of learning from and with peers, between equals**, which would involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience. In particular, he suggested the **need for defining the so-called peers** in such a setting as policy-makers working on SD policy issues being peers of other policy-makers working on the same topic, with the inclusion of stakeholder experts on SD (i.e. CSO, business, academia, etc.). He also presented two main peer mechanisms that are currently applied in SD and that could inform the development of the ESDN Peer Learning Platform: (1) Peer Reviews (i.e. OECD experience), and (2) Networks of peers (i.e. ESDN). After touching upon examples of peer reviews and peer learning (i.e. UN, OECD, NSDSs peer review in European countries), he finally shared several thoughts and ideas for reflection: (1) although a large experience existed on SD strategies and SD policies in Member States and European countries, **no space for exchange and learning** from one another was to be found; (2) Europe and its countries were still facing a strong 'SILO' mentality, therefore going in the opposite direction from the key ideas behind the 2030 Agenda: a **systemic approach, integration and policy coherence**; (3) a strong push would be necessary in terms of **cooperation and collaboration between all political levels**, although duplication and forgetfulness on the political sphere would be potentially high; and, (4) there was a sense of losing **political momentum** already against very short-term issues (i.e. refugee crisis, Brexit).

**INGEBORG NIESTROY** (*International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD - Public Strategy for SD*) in her keynote "**Benefits of Peer Learning/Peer Review as a governance mechanism for policy implementation**" focused on peer learning and peer review in the context of the wider governance concept *Sustaining Sustainability*, offered several reflections on the Workshop's Discussion Paper, and suggested recommendations. Firstly, she stressed the need for governance for the 2030 Agenda implementation and argued that such a common policy agenda would also help peer learning, as it represented a common point of reference for everybody. She then showed Fig.1 below and highlighted, in particular, the governance principle for SD known as '**reflexivity**' in relation to **Peer Learning** as a support tool for 'continuous reflection'.

Fig.1 'Governance principles for SD'

Characteristics of integration	Governance principle	What needs to be coordinated/integrated?	Challenge for a governance for SD
Policy sectors / areas	Horizontal coordination/integration	Multiple sectors: economic, social and environmental policies	Policy coherence
Policy levels	Vertical coordination/integration	Multiple levels: local, subnational, national and supranational	Links/cooperation of governments and administrations at all levels
Actors	Participation	Multiple actors: decision-makers and stakeholders from politics, business and civil society	Stakeholder participation in discussion and decision-making processes
Knowledge	<b>Reflexivity</b>	Knowledge and experience from various areas in society ("walks of life")	Continuous reflection of ones decisions
Time	Intergenerational justice	Long- and short-term thinking	Long-term thinking despite short election cycles

Source: Niestroy (2014: 158, adapted from Jacob et al. 2013: 18 and Steurer 2010: 37)

She then presented the study 'Sustaining Sustainability' on 9 EU Member States on multi-sector, multi-level, multi-actor governance, which tried to consider (a) a broader political and administrative framework, (b) different practice of stakeholder participation, (c) the role and function of SD Councils, and (d) different understanding of SD strategies, depending on the prevailing governance style. She argued that each country had a different starting point and Europe's asset was the variety of approaches. Peer Learning, she stressed, would be, therefore, very much needed. She then mentioned that the study became a peer learning process itself, highlighted that SD councils were important as 'agents', advisors and communicators, and that moving towards SD was a learning process as such. Furthermore, she presented several reflections on the workshop discussion paper provided by the ESDN Office on topics such as which peers to involve, which type of peer review, and the need also for the 2030 Agenda to reinvigorate North-South constellations in peer learning/peer reviews. Finally, she offered several recommendations: Firstly, she proposed that the ESDN should (a) conduct inner circle/"life in ministries" type of peer learning; (b) join up with initiatives for stakeholder peer learning; (c) promote and foster stakeholder peer reviews and partnerships for review; and (d) develop a wider menu of peer models. Secondly, she suggested that within governments there was the **necessity to better link the domestic aspect of SD (largely environmental) and the external strand (development cooperation and foreign affairs)**. In this context, the ESDN could **link up with colleagues from various sectoral ministries** (e.g. to the Focal Points for Policy Coherence for Development). Thirdly, she argued that ESDN's one unique selling point was the **country level information** and that ESDN should **put emphasis on comprehensive and updated country profiles**. Fourthly, she suggested **involving countries and actors from the South** in the context of peer learning (e.g. like Finland linking up with Colombia).

A Q&A followed in which participants underlined the importance and need for peer learning. Suggestions for getting high-level support for peer learning were made. **INGEBORG NIESTROY** pointed to **role of the SD Councils as helpful mechanisms to support peer learning, mobilize power, increase stakeholder involvement**. **UMBERTO PISANO** mentioned the **importance of transparency** and stressed that **outreach was crucial to increase the potential for peer learning** to support implementing the 2030 Agenda for SD.

## Session 2: National and International Examples of Peer Reviews and Peer Learning

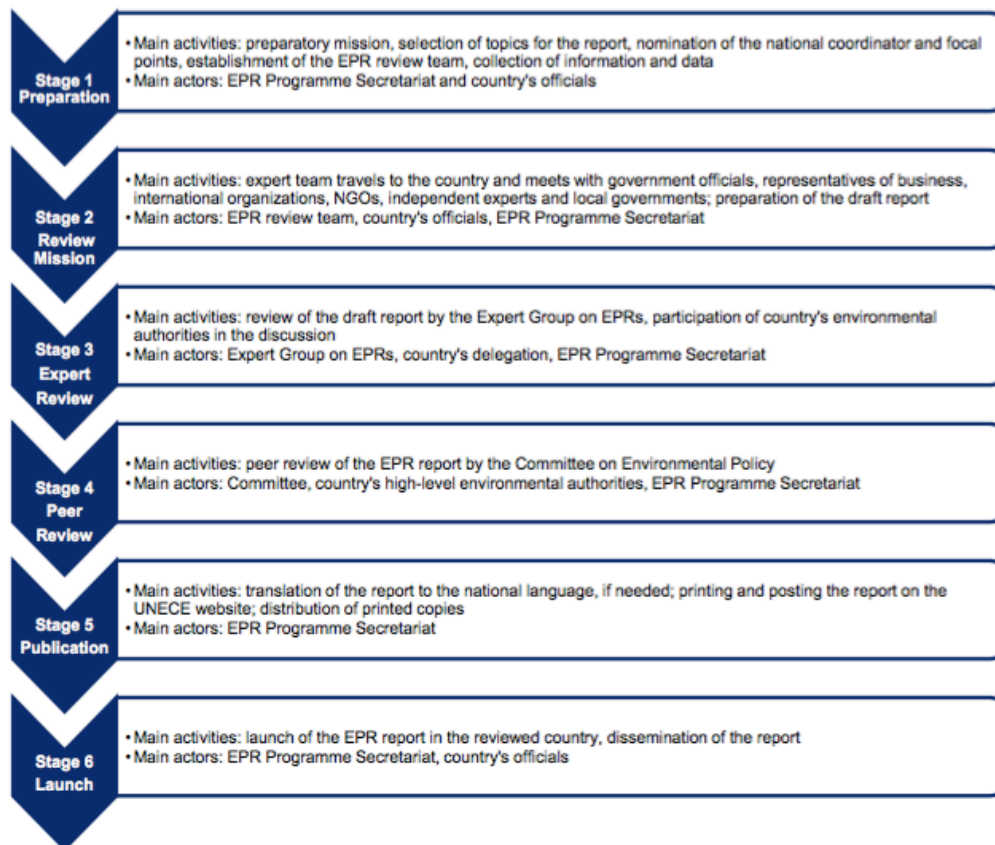
On the topic 'UN experiences with Peer Reviews and Peer Learning in the context of the 2030 Agenda for SD: reflections towards the National Reviews at the UN High Level Political Forum', four speakers provided input and reflections: **WONDWOSEN ASNAKE** and **ANTOINE NUNES** offered insights from two UN agencies dealing with peer reviews; **ANNIKA LINDBLOM** from Finland and **DORIS ANGST** from Switzerland provided views from national level implementation and their experiences with voluntary national reviews for the upcoming 2016 UN High Level Political Forum National Reviews.

Firstly, **WONDWOSEN ASNAKE** (*Regional Office for Europe – UNEP*) talked about the HLPF Process in general, and the Voluntary National Reviews in connection to the topic of 'Peer Learning' in particular, also with a short general overview on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He then described how the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was contributing to the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner by (a) setting the global environmental agenda, (b) providing policy guidance and defining policy responses, (c) undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences, and (d) fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization. He continued by explaining UNEP's position in the context of enhancing its activities, in cooperation with other UN entities, in support of the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda at national, regional and global levels. He also mentioned that UNEP was taking action to enhance coordinated, coherent and integrated delivery within the UN system on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, by (a) fostering **partnerships** and other means of **cooperation** with other relevant United Nations bodies; (b) engaging with **regional coordination mechanisms**, as appropriate; (c) actively promoting the **integration** of the environmental dimension **into United Nations development assistance frameworks** at the country level; and (d) enhancing **institutional and human capacity building** at the national, regional and international levels. He then touched upon the importance of **Multi-stakeholder Partnerships**, of **follow up and review** (through the provision of policy relevant information, and through assessment processes such as the **Global Environment Outlook**), and of **science-policy interface** which would (a) help indicators to support monitoring the delivery of the environmental dimension, (b) raise awareness about environmental policies proven to be effective in achieving SD, (c) provide policy-relevant information on trends in global sustainability, (d) support informed decision-making and (e) strengthen implementation. With regards to **peer learning**, he firstly stressed the role of **Regional Coordination Mechanisms** that promoted cooperation among UN regional entities and their various partners in addressing regional, cross-cutting policy issues and provided regional perspectives to the global level. Secondly, he mentioned the **United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF)** that included the so-called '*Peer Support Group (PSG)*', also involving the **sharing of good practices and lessons learned**. Thirdly, he pointed out Multilateral Environmental Agreements (**MEAs synergies**) and their ability to speak with one voice, taking a joint approach to reporting and assessment, providing coherent and coordinated scientific advice, and assuring consistency of decisions in governing bodies. Finally, he offered reflections on the 2030 Agenda for SD and mentioned **systemic issues** linked to **policy and institutional coherence**, **multi-stakeholder partnerships**, and **data, monitoring and accountability**. He then argued for the 2030 Agenda as a **once-in-a-generation opportunity**, **transformative** and **unprecedented** if seen collectively as an **integrated** and **indivisible** agenda, achieved through **joint action**, cooperation, working together, in which **SDGs are localized and domesticated to form the fabric of national development planning**, and with an **unprecedented engagement** in planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and review of policies and actions.



**ANTOINE NUNES** (*United Nations Economic Commission for Europe – UNECE*) outlined different performance reviews and peer review mechanisms carried out by UNECE. He then explained in depth the steps taken (see **Fig.2** below) in the context of one of such peer review mechanisms – the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) and related them to peer learning.

**Fig.2 The EPRs process**



Source: Nunes, A. (2016) Presentation at 14th ESDN Workshop, 14 June 2016

He stressed that, within such steps, peer learning happened especially between step 2, 3 and 4. He mentioned that although peer review was the main process, peer learning was also an **intrinsic part** of it but **not specifically designed**. He then said that at the 8<sup>th</sup> “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference (Batumi, 2016) the role EPRs could play in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region was highlighted. Finally, he argued for **options to integrate SDGs in EPRs**: (1) to integrate EPR-relevant SDGs into the contents of the chapters of the EPR reports; (2) to introduce a comprehensive chapter on the assessment of the progress that a country has made towards achieving EPR-relevant SDGs. Such a chapter could provide a detailed coverage of all EPR-relevant SDGs; and (3) to integrate EPR-relevant SDGs into the contents of the chapters of the EPR report and cover in an additional chapter those SDGs that were not addressed by other chapters and as requested by the country under review.

The moderator then asked how the two speakers were relating to the HLPF process: **WONDWOSEN ASNAKE** stressed that the **HLPF** was a **learning process for all**, including the UN, especially in the context of the Voluntary National Reviews. **ANTOINE NUNES** argued that **peer reviews - and peer learning – in one macro-region should also strive to involve neighboring countries from a different macro-region**. **GERALD BERGER** (*ESDN Office – Institute for Managing Sustainability*) asked about differences between peer learning and peer review in the UNECE approach. **ANTOINE NUNES** pointed out that peer learning was intrinsically part of the peer review process, although not specifically designed within the process. **UMBERTO PISANO** (*ESDN Office – Institute for Managing Sustainability*) then asked if there was a **learning loop in the process**, and

why learning was not reflected at the end of the EPRs processes. **ANTOINE NUNES** replied that learning with the stakeholders could also be brought in and was recommended. He also mentioned that reports usually included recommendations that would then need to be taken up or reflected upon in policies of reviewed countries.

**ANNIKA LINDBLOM** (*Ministry of the Environment, Finland*) began her presentation by mentioning that Finland had been involved in early peer learning exercises in the context of NSDSs in Europe. She introduced the Finnish 2030 Agenda implementation plans at the national level and said they are currently preparing the Finnish voluntary report for the HLPF. She then argued that Finland wanted to be one of the first voluntary reporting countries to share experiences, such as the SD mechanisms put in place (i.e. the Finnish National SD Commission, SD strategy processes, etc.). She continued by pointing out that engaging in this process was also taken as a way to engage Finnish society in the 2030/SDG process, which remains still a challenge. She also mentioned that HLPF voluntary reporting countries from Europe met in Berlin, then at a UN retreat in April 2016 with all 22 HLPF reporting countries present. In addition, the Finnish National SD Commission visited Estonia and, finally, Finland takes part in a bilateral peer learning process organized between Finland and Colombia. In this regard, she said that the cooperation between Finland and Colombia has started about 1 year before with various HLPF preparatory events and meetings, and, recently, a week of joint workshop in Bogota took place with a specific focus on integration of SDGs in national SD strategies, inclusion of private sector, and SDG indicators. She also reported about the lessons learnt from the bilateral peer exchange with Colombia : (1) the organized and systematic way to address SD issues by Colombia; (2) presence of common issues, such as the need for an integrated approach to avoid keeping working in silos for solving SD problems, or the comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach envisaged; and (3) existing differences, such as: Finland performed a **full gap analysis** with the decision of **sequencing SDGs**, while Colombia only undertook a mapping exercise followed by prioritization; different **SDGs focus**; presence of a **systematic reporting system** in place in Colombia; or the Colombian **outreach activities in a large number of municipalities**. She then argued that 'peers' should not only come from OECD countries, but there is added value in involving countries such as Colombia. She also stressed how the **engagement of society** was very demanding and needed ideas and attention. She concluded by offering to organize the ESDN Peer Visit in Finland in 2017.

**DORIS ANGST** (*Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE, Switzerland*) in her presentation of '**Switzerland's initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD (Report for the HLPF 2016) and experiences with peer learning**' mainly focused on the Swiss experience with preparing for the National Reviews at the HLPF in connection to 'Peer Learning' and shortly reflected on Swiss experiences with **peer reviews and peer learning as a tool to support work with SD policymaking**. She argued that the Swiss voluntary national review for the HLPF will not be a *real* review, but more a description of initial steps toward the 2030 Agenda implementation. She said that the report would be drafted by an **inter-ministerial working group** after discussion in the established **participatory consultation mechanism** within the Federal Administration and **exchanges with other countries**. She then draw lessons learnt of the 'Informal Retreat' of the voluntary review countries of the UNECE region that will present at the 2016 HLPF. She mentioned that countries had **similar difficulties in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, chose a similar approaches (i.e. mapping-process with gap-analyses in order to define priorities) and considered the 2030 Agenda as a whole package (horizontal, cross-sectoral approach). She then mentioned monitoring and indicators as a complex issue, and highlighted the **need for advocacy and awareness raising, together with the involvement of stakeholders at all levels**.

In the following **Q&A**, the moderator asked both countries representatives about the **most innovative element** that differentiated the learning in the 2030 Agenda/SDG from work done before. **DORIS ANGST** mentioned working closer together with policy-makers from other sectors and the coordination of international and national issues. **ANNIKA LINDBLOM** stressed the new challenge of linking two separate constituents as

those working in development policy and those working on the domestic agenda, and the increasing cooperation between the two fields.

**EBBA DOHLMAN** (OECD) in her keynote on “**OECD Peer Reviews: Framework for Sharing Experiences and Best Practices**” focused on four main issues: (1) Description of peer reviews at the OECD; (2) reasoning behind peer reviews; (3) functioning of peer reviews; and (4) challenges in light of the SDGs. Firstly, she defined a **peer review as a systematic examination and assessment** of the (individual and collective) performance of a country by other countries with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed country **improve its policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles**. She then described the peer reviews as undertaken by the OECD and pointed out that although no standardised peer review mechanism existed, peer reviews were always carried out as part of a committee process with: (a) a mandate; (b) agreed set of principles, standards, and criteria against which the country performance is to be reviewed; (c) clear roles and responsibilities for the actors (i.e. committee, secretariat, examiners, country examined), and (d) an agreed set of procedures and outputs with continuous reflection, discussion, and updating by the relevant committee as appropriate. With regards to the reasoning behind peer reviews, she mentioned the **benefits for the reviewed country** such as (1) independent assessment by an IO and OECD, (2) improved understanding of key challenges and ways to achieve better performance on a sustainable basis, (3) evidence based, targeted recommendations to support reform and progress, and (4) promotion of national level coordination, coherence and integration as well as stakeholder consultations. Then, she outlined the benefits for the committee and the broader public: (1) **accountability** both nationally and internationally, (2) **collective learning** that comes from policy dialogue and sharing of good practices among countries, (3) **identification of spill-over effects** with meaningful implications for other countries. Thirdly, she talked about how peer reviews are performed and touched upon topics such as **formality, frequency, timeframe, actors, structure**. She then explained the steps before, during and after peer reviews, also mentioning follow-up actions. She then introduced the OECD Green Growth Strategy (2011) and the work done under **policy coherence in the SDG Framework**. Finally, she concluded by suggesting to consider (a) policy inter-linkages with implications for the “here and now”, “tomorrow” and “elsewhere”, and (b) ex-ante, during, and ex-post the unintended consequences of policies.

**GÜNTHER BACHMANN** (German National Council for Sustainable Development - RNE) in his presentation of “**The German NSDS Peer Review process’: lessons for Peer Learning**” stressed the **importance of having a political buy-in, high-level commitment, and ownership of the peer review**. He then mentioned that since the blueprint for a peer review procedure was difficult to find, it was decided to include 3 new things for the German NSDS peer review process: (1) to make the Chancellor the ‘owner’ of the review; (2) to create a process that would be inclusive, and bring in people from all kinds of backgrounds; and, (3) to choose peers according to the content and focus of the peer review. He then pointed out that the RNE was successful in making possible that the Chair of the peer review and the individual peers were mandated by the Chancellery. In addition, he suggested that a **successful factor** was to **make clear what to do with the results and how to proceed with them**. He then announced the next peer review in Germany in 2018 with the effort of using the policy cycle of the HLPF. Finally, he touched upon the **lessons learnt** and argued that: (1) Scalability was possible, (2) inclusion reduced costs, (3) communication between peers and facilitator were key, and (4) policy circle allowed for different options. In terms of **benefits**, he mentioned bridging, advancing, and credibility. With respect to **limitations**, he two groups of issues: (1) Time, availability of peers, capacity of facilitator; and (2) culture and benchmarking. He concluded by highlighting the need to clearly define who the peers are in any given context.

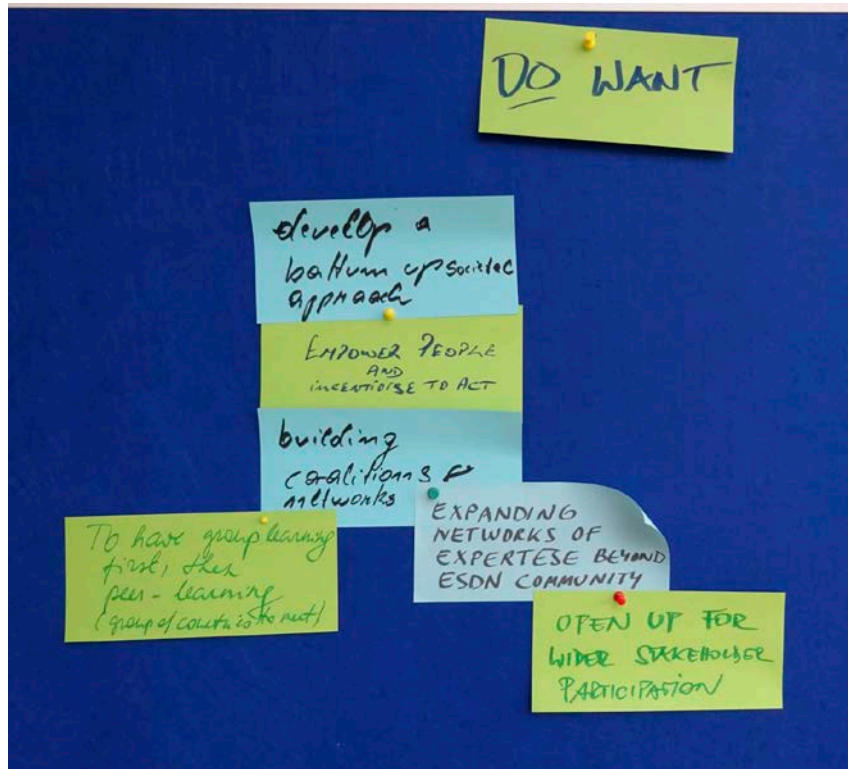
## Session 3: Developing the ESDN peer learning approach

Two interactive sessions took place in the afternoon. Working groups of 6-8 participants were formed to discuss on tables.



In the first interactive session, participants were asked to discuss about the guiding question 'What should be the added-value of a ESDN Peer Learning platform?' and suggest on moderation cards what they wanted or did not wanted to see in a ESDN Peer Learning Platform. In the following Fig.3, the group work results are presented:

Fig.3 What should be the added-value of a ESDN Peer Learning platform?



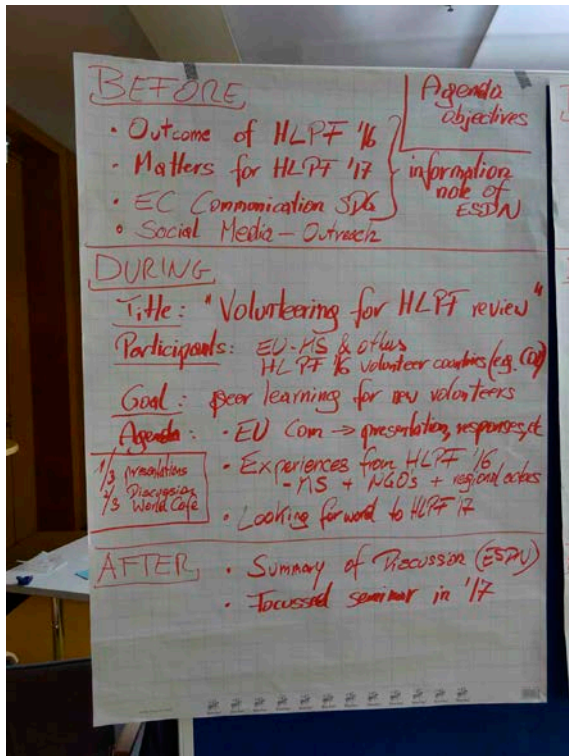


In the second interactive session, participants were asked to discuss about the guiding question '**How could the ESDN Peer Learning Platform look like?**' and, as design teams, suggest what should be done before, during, and after an ESDN Peer Learning Platform.

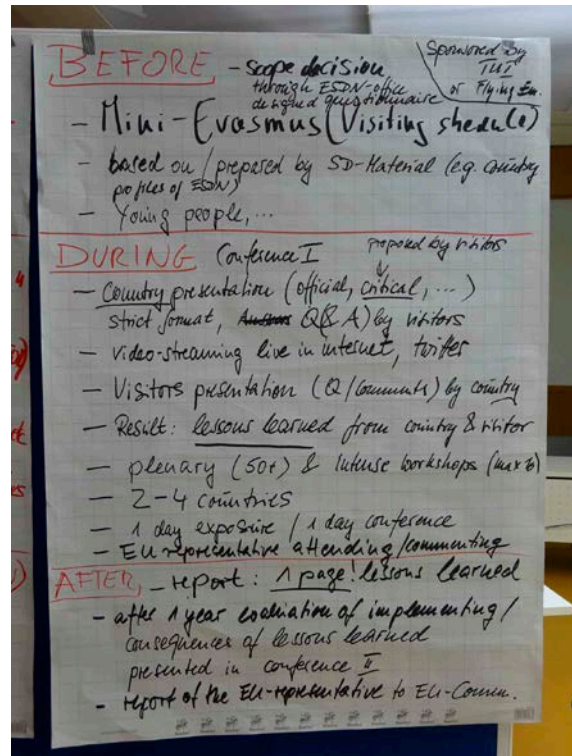


In the following pictures, the 5 working groups' suggestions are presented:

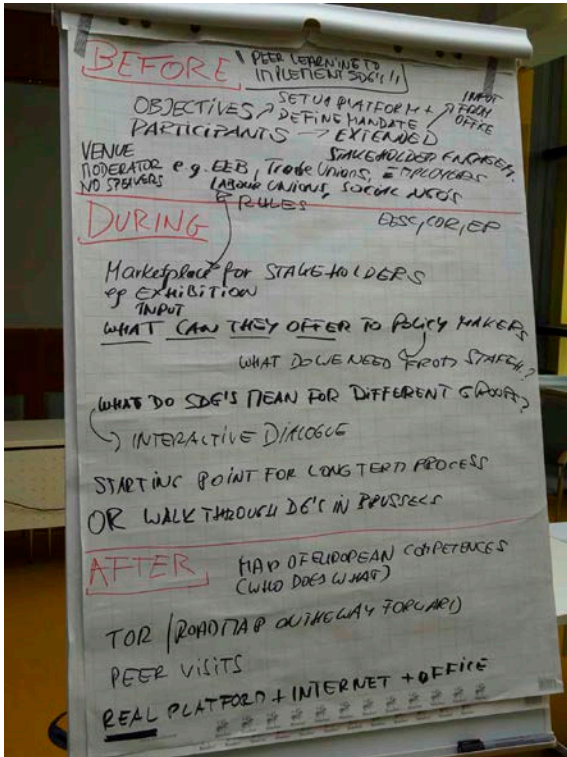
Group 1



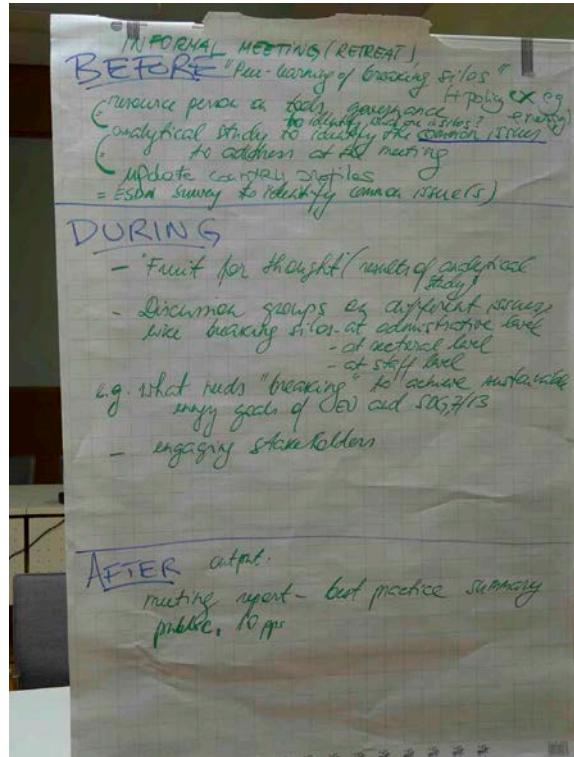
Group 2



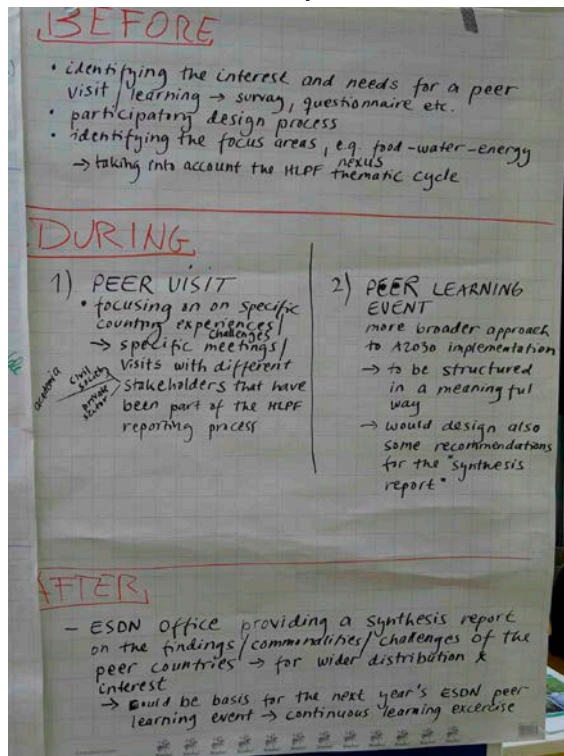
Group 3



Group 4



Group 5



At the end of the interactive sessions, **JÖRG MAYER-RIES** suggested to transfer ESDN ideas on how to bring in SDGs also into the OECD peer reviews, and reflected on how to link the European Commission communication on SDGs and SD policy in Europe.



### Conclusions and next steps

In the concluding session of the workshop, **ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER** reminded the participants that the ESDN's efforts on Peer Learning were devoted to implementing the SDGs, and not just for peer learning in abstract terms. She also informed the participants that the outcomes of this workshop will be used as basis by the ESDN Steering Group and the ESDN Office to design the format of the ESDN Peer Learning Platform format.

**DORIS ANGST** announced the forthcoming ESDN Conference 2016 that will take place in Bern, Switzerland on 10-11 November 2016 on the topic of **vertical integration of the 2030 Agenda implementation and involvement of the sub-national level**.

**JÖRG MAYER-RIES** finally closed the event and thanked the participants for their contributions and suggestions for the ESDN Peer Learning approach.

