

CONFERENCE FLASH
From MDG to SDG - New Aspects of Global Development Strategies
Vienna, Austria, January 18, 2016

Conference Summary:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect in January 2016 and will set the development agenda until 2030. They proclaim a holistic vision of sufficient livelihoods and sustainability in ways not yet seen from a document of this scope. What are the main challenges ahead? This was the focus of the Vienna conference, organized by Oikodrom in collaboration with the Austrian Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.

The 17 defined goals and 169 targets of the SDGs lead to questions about feasibility of monitoring, financing, and trade-offs between goals. As opening speaker Sylvia Meier-Kajbic (BMEIA) noted, the Ministries in Austria are mandated to implement the 2030 SDG agenda, in close collaboration between the relevant government bodies, the social partners, civil society and science. An inter-ministerial working group on the SDGs is currently being formed.



Conference Participants



Opening Speakers (from left to right): Min. Sylvia Meier-Kajbic (BMEIA), Min. Elfriede-Anna More (BMLFUW), Min. Evi Frei (BMWFW), and Heidi Dumreicher (Oikodrom)

Topics explored:

The event that took place in the beautiful historic setting of Palais Ferstl in Vienna, explored the relationship between sustainability, development, and poverty reduction, and brought together international researchers, policy makers from four different Austrian Ministries and a variety of stakeholders from the field of development. Six renowned international experts provided input, followed by an interactive policy-oriented workshop on the following four selected SDGs (see also page 2, 3):

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1)
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG 5)
- Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
- Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)

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Conference Participants included representatives of the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, and the Ministry for Women's Affairs; also in attendance were researchers from several universities, AG Global Verantwortung, Weltladen Baden, Oikodrom experts, and representatives of NGOs. The event was held in the context of the large scale EU Project Nopoos, in which more than 100 scientists explore new methods to identify key dynamics of poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with the goal of producing evidence-based policy advice for policymakers around the globe.

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Impulse Talks:

Dr. Rainer Thiele, economist at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, Germany, contextualized the structure and potential of the SDGs and provided an outlook on main challenges and points for consideration on the way to realizing the SDGs.

Dr. Georg Grünberg, expert on Latin America and consultant for international cooperation and development research, dealt with the worldview of the inhabitants of the Amazon, where "Nature" is a subject acting through social relationships between all living beings rather than an object to be appropriated by human beings.

Dr.in Bettina Kolb, sociologist and lecturer at the Vienna University, demonstrated the complexity and highlighted the importance of empowerment and equality-building initiatives, and presented results from her participatory research in Vietnam and Mexico carried out in the context of the Nopoos project.

Dr. Matteo Malvani, international consultant on territorial cooperation and urban/regional development, discussed urban density, population shifts, and the importance of knowledge-transfer in sustainable urban and territorial cooperation.

Univ. Prof. Richard S. Levine, Centre for Sustainable Cities, Lexington, US, discussed the potential of the city as a microcosm for creating a sustainable inclusive system, and put into question the economic implications of the SDGs.

Mag.a Sophia Veßel, AG Globale Verantwortung (the Austrian NGO Platform for Development Cooperation) focused on the controversial relationship between North-led development and the state of human rights in aid-receiving countries.

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Policy Oriented Recommendations of the Working Groups:

- 1. Is ending poverty in all its forms everywhere an achievable goal? (SDG 1)**
 - Explore redistribution/ reduction of inequality to reduce poverty, and rely less on growth as an instrument
 - Learn from successful social movements and political formations in Latin America
 - Knowledge-sharing, best practices
 - Raise awareness and mainstream the SDGs to reduce poverty with an interlinked approach
 - Move the conversation from political to social
 - Integrate the goals, rather than siphoning responsibilities to separate ministries and actors

- 2. Empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5):**
 - Combat structural discrimination against all marginalized groups; gender equality does not equal empowerment
 - Address the causes, not the symptoms
 - Take a social approach to anchor equality in a strong way

- 3. Sustainable cities (SDG 11):**
 - Empower through coordination and community awareness on a local level
 - Cooperate between sectors and look for synergies
 - Civic involvement:
 - Start with topics of interest, e.g. urban gardening, photovoltaic projects, organized by citizens
 - Smart government approach: one-stop shop, non-bureaucratic

- 4. The future of collaborative economy (SDG 12):**
 - Address the paradox of sustainable growth and come back to the roots of collaborative economy
 - Consider other alternatives that are more sustainable but not collaborative economy; e.g. strengthening the local production
 - Reassess what we want and what we need as humans, as a generation

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EU Contribution:

8 000 000 €

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Project Coordinator: IRD – Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France

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