

## **Belgium has just presented a Voluntary National Review: what's next? Call for action of the Belgian youth**

Belgium's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) was a great opportunity to identify our main strengths and weaknesses and raise awareness around the SDGs in the country. The Belgian youth believes it is crucial to keep the momentum going. In order to ensure the SDGs become a reality by 2030, we call on the federal and regional governments and all stakeholders to contribute to the following:

- **Accelerate the efforts to fight climate change and protect our planet**

Belgium has to reduce its carbon emissions by 35% by 2030 to meet the European climate commitments. All stakeholders in Belgium recognize that it will be very difficult unless drastic decisions are taken in the field of industries, housing, transport, energy and agriculture. The European Environment Agency also recently listed Belgium among the 11 member states with the least satisfying results regarding atmospheric and air pollution. Climate change will not wait. For the sake of our planet and intergenerational equity, the fight against climate change should be a top priority. Actions to consider: substantial investments in renewable energies and sustainable agricultural practices, divest from fossil fuels, actively discourage the use of cars in favour of 'soft' transport and sustainable public transport, renovate public buildings to move towards low-carbon and later zero-carbon infrastructure, support the circular and local economy, reduce waste production, properly manage resources and ban disposable plastics.

- **Strengthen education and awareness-raising efforts around the SDGs**

One cannot repeat it enough: to make the SDGs a reality, we need everyone on board! To make sure everyone participates in the Global Goals, let us ensure that all members of society are aware of the challenges and of the existence of a global agenda to make the world a better place. Schools are a key place to start because the earlier you learn about the necessity to live sustainably, the better. We look forward to seeing the SDGs fully integrated in the school curricula. We also need to hear more about the SDGs in the media, because all generations need to be aware of the necessary changes.

- **Dare to be ambitious, innovative, participative and inclusive**

No matter which SDG is concerned, a great deal of ambition and fresh ideas are needed. We should not be afraid to do things differently and to be bold. The business sector and the younger generation have a key role to play in this regard. Let us join our forces and come up with innovative partnerships to create the framework that is needed to ensure sustainable choices are the easiest for everyone. And let us not forget in this process that participation is not about mere consultation. It's about shaping all together a better world, without leaving anyone behind.

We fully support the proposals of the Perspective 2030 campaign <http://www.cncd.be/-perspective2030-> :

- **Officially integrate the 2030 Agenda in the Belgian legislative and budget structures**

\*An SDG check through which every new piece of legislation would go through should be created.

\*To be fully in line with the SDGs, all ministers should explain in detail in their policy notes at the beginning of each mandate how they will contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

\*All new budget plans should be guaranteed "SDG proof". If we want to make the SDGs a reality, we need to ensure that we are no longer investing public funding in unsustainable sectors.

- **Set up a transparent and inclusive permanent structure to monitor the SDGs**

An ad hoc steering committee was created to ensure proper coordination in the framework of the VNR process. However, a permanent representative body with members of civil society and all the central stakeholders is needed to keep a close eye on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda both inside and outside of Belgium. This will help ensure a consistent implementation of the Global Goals.

- **Allocate the necessary and adequate funding to properly implement the SDGs**

Everyone can recognize that considerable investments are needed to finance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is also very clear the cost of doing nothing would be undoubtedly much higher. Therefore, we need to ensure that the necessary and adequate funding are allocated. Potential approaches include developing structural mechanisms preventing tax evasion and finding new sources of income by consistently implementing the polluter-pays principle.