

Shaping transformation fairly together

German Sustainable Development Strategy Update 2025



The Federal Government



Sustainable Development STRATEGY for Germany

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Foreword

The international community's adoption of the 2030 Agenda marks a milestone in international cooperation for a better future. It represents a shared, positive vision for the future of a world without hunger, poverty and discrimination, with fair growth to maintain prosperity while preserving biodiversity, the environment and the climate and safeguarding the prospects and opportunities of future generations.

The international community has recently faced some obstacles on its path towards achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), owing to wars and crises and an increasingly polarised global environment in which multilateral cooperation and collaboration are coming under pressure. We must use the five years remaining to achieve the SDGs to make rapid, resolute progress.

Germany is working hard at international level to that end. With the Pact for the Future, we have succeeded at United Nations level in sending a clear signal for multilateralism. The Hamburg Sustainability Conference held last autumn made an important contribution with its ambitious work on concrete solutions for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The international community rightly expects a great deal from Germany's contribution to the attainment of the SDGs.

At national level, the update to the German Sustainable Development Strategy provides the political framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda. It describes the path towards sustainable, economically strong, socially equitable and environmentally sound development in Germany. Among other things, this updated Sustainable Development Strategy strengthens the important social dimension of sustainability, which is integral to the 2030 Agenda, and puts more emphasis on inclusion, participation and education.

Our shared success on the way to a sustainable society needs not only a shared vision for the future but also the necessary societal cohesion on the way to that future. On that depends success. At the various levels of our federal society, we must create the necessary infrastructure for energy and transport, in schools, in the health sector, in our social security systems and on the labour market.

Particularly at a time characterised by processes of change and upheaval, there is a need for a clear concept of how we wish to live together in the future. Developing and shaping this concept is our opportunity to ensure a bright future for all and the core of the German Sustainable Development Strategy.

Sarah Ryglewski
Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor

Summary

The German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) is the roadmap for sustainable development in, with and by Germany. It is aligned with the goals of the 2030 Agenda – an important milestone in international cooperation and a strong commitment to multilateralism. The 2030 Agenda offers a positive vision of a better future with liveable cities, clean air and rivers, affordable energy and mobility, good jobs, fair wages and less inequality. Implementing the goals of the 2030 Agenda before the end of this decade is crucial to ensure a good life for all people on this planet for the long term. Sustainable development offers the opportunity to tackle the many different challenges at national, European and international level in such a way that democracy, peace, prosperity and our environment are safeguarded for the long term.

The GSDS was further developed in a comprehensive dialogue process with all sections of society. The 2025 GSDS focuses particularly on the **social dimension** of sustainability. This integral aspect of the 2030 Agenda pledges to leave no one behind. On the basis of a strong foundation of the welfare state in Germany, one key aim of the GSDS is to further strengthen the social dimension of sustainability in all areas of transformation and to shape processes of adjustment in a socially equitable way. One way to reduce inequalities is to implement measures to improve education opportunities, ensure fair working conditions and reduce discrimination. Social justice requires that education opportunities and earnings potential are not dependent on social background. Gender equality and the social participation of young people, older people and people with disabilities are vital aspects of the further development of the GSDS. Inclusion and universal participation are an important basis for social cohesion – something that needs to be preserved more than ever.

The current **ecological and economic challenges** confront us with the realisation that we can no longer put off the necessary measures to strengthen and tie in this dimension of sustainability. The ecological dimension of sustainability is crucial in that it makes a positive contribution both to the social and to the economic dimension of sustainability.

Only if we preserve the natural resource base on which life depends – for example, an adequate supply of clean water, clean air, fertile soils and, in particular, a stable climate and resilient ecosystems – will we also preserve the preconditions for human development, health, well-being and prosperity and contribute to security and peace. The goal is therefore a greenhouse gas-neutral, environmentally sound Germany with an intact, diverse natural environment. Sustainable infrastructures, digitalisation and sustainable circular economic management are crucial for sustainable prosperity in Germany. To maintain its prosperity, Germany must remain a strong industrial centre.

In order to achieve sustainable development by 2030, we need to step up and speed up our efforts. With this aim in mind, the further development of the GSDS looks at central areas of transformation and so-called levers. These describe the measures necessary for the transformation.

Six areas of transformation

The “**Human well-being and capabilities; social justice**” area of transformation concentrates on the social dimension of sustainability. The priority is to focus on the well-being of all people. Health, education, equality and social justice play a key role. The aim is to provide people with key skills in the transition to greater sustainability. The approach followed is oriented to people’s differing everyday realities, needs and interests and takes these into account when planning services. A host of measures strengthen individual, institutional and societal resources. Education plays a central role in enabling people to lead a self-determined, conscientious life and should not be dependent on social background.

Health is a fundamental prerequisite both for individual freedom and for social participation. Human and animal health are closely linked to the state of ecosystems and the climate. Thus the One Health approach aims to ensure the improved health of people, animals and ecosystems. It is also

a matter of ensuring that health promotion aspects are given considerably greater attention in *all* policy fields, as envisaged in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. This also serves to reduce negative impacts on health.

The **energy transition and climate action** pose central challenges to humanity, as human-induced climate change is already having marked effects. Germany has therefore speedily dismantled obstacles to the expansion of renewable energies and the necessary grid infrastructure, in order not only to ensure nature- and environmentally-friendly climate action but also to ensure an affordable, secure supply of energy and maintain prosperity. In order to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C within reach, there is a need for measures that are more binding, greater ambition and more joint endeavours at international level. Germany has pledged to be greenhouse gas-neutral by 2045. Important steps to that end include the Fit for 55 package, the expansion of renewable energies, the associated modernisation of the energy system and grid expansion. At global level, too, Germany is committed to establishing more ambitious international climate action goals. At the 29th Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku it was possible to prevent the milestones already reached from being flung into jeopardy. At national level, the precautionary Climate Adaptation Strategy presented in December 2024 contains for the first time measurable targets for adaptation to the effects of climate change in the areas of responsibility of the Federation. It is also necessary to support partner countries in decarbonising their economies and to promote international cooperation. In this connection, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz said at COP28: "In 2022, Germany already exceeded its goal of making available at least six billion euro of international climate finance each year."

The transition to more **circular economic management** is a decisive lever for a life and economic activity within planetary boundaries and for the achievement of the goals of the Paris Agreement as well as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. The circular economy is a holistic approach that shapes the entire value creation cycle in a sustainable way, thereby helping to overcome ecological crises and reduce dependence on imported raw materials. Measures such as the introduction of the single-use plastics fund, increased waste reduction and encouraging consumers to make sustainable choices work to that end. Germany is also active at international level, working, for instance, for an international and legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution and for the circular economy to be integrated into the most important international environmental forums (including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC); Germany is driving work on this within the G7/G20 and is working with international partners to

build a network of states and institutions. The National Circular Economy Strategy (NCES) provides the strategic framework for enhanced coherence between the various measures and initiatives. It is thus intended to shape the transformation to a circular economy and to address the various target dimensions of circular economic management in a coherent way. Particular priorities are to ensure broad acceptance and participation by society and to provide employees with skills.

The "**Sustainable construction and sustainable mobility**" area of transformation covers the built environment, its planning, construction and use, and its impact on the environment and climate. The way in which towns and cities are planned and built has an influence on people's quality of life as they live alongside each other, as well as on their health, productivity and well-being. Building, housing, transport, green spaces and urban development, with all their different utilisation requirements, must be considered as an ensemble if we are to make a necessary contribution towards achieving the SDGs. The Federation provides support to towns and municipalities working for sustainable development and creates legal and financial frameworks. Measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, promote climate-friendly construction and develop circular construction methods have been taken in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make existing building stock climate-resilient. The aim is for the existing building stock to be greenhouse gas-neutral by 2045. Integrated mobility planning, systematic networking of transport operators and a close mesh between individual and public mobility can make a key contribution to sustainable mobility. Socially equitable, greenhouse gas-neutral and environmentally sound mobility planning is a prerequisite for sustainable development in Germany and crucial for quality of life and prosperity.

The aim of the sustainable transformation of the **agricultural and food systems** is to ensure future-proof, crisis-resilient agriculture, food production and forestry that guarantee adequate, sustainable and healthy food for all people worldwide for the long term and at the same time protect the environment, animals and the climate. The priorities are to protect biodiversity in keeping with the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the National Strategy on Biological Diversity 2030, and to support organic farming. In this context, the economic possibilities of farmers are to be taken into account. Regional value creation chains are to be strengthened in order to ease the effects of global supply chains. Measures for sustainable food systems also include the away-from-home catering sector, the reduction of food waste and the promotion of gender equality, the interests of young people, engagement and voluntary work.

The “**Pollutant-free environment**” area of transformation is focusing on the pollution crisis as one of the three major planetary environmental crises of our age. The aim is to better recognise the impact of harmful materials, to identify risk measures and to reduce pollution. Chemicals are omnipresent and have both positive and negative effects on the environment and on human health. Many substances can have dangerous properties and can be harmful to the environment or to health if they are used or disposed of in excess or improperly. Preserving the boundaries of our planet’s resilience requires precautionary action and the elaboration of integrative, just, cross-border solutions. International, European and national chemical safety measures and the further development of the relevant regulations are needed. This includes, among other things, improved scientific fundamentals, programmatic approaches and regulatory measures. Cooperation with private institutions, too, serves to enhance chemical safety.

Three policy areas with considerable leverage

A sustainable and intergenerationally equitable **financial policy** plays an important role as a lever. What is needed is a financial policy geared to stability that acts in a sustainable, efficient and transformational manner, ensures the sustainability of the Federation’s explicit and implicit liabilities with sound state finances and invests in a high-performance infrastructure, high-speed internet, roads and rail networks, a reliable energy supply and an agile and digital state. Germany is to become a leading international location for sustainable finance. The necessary framework conditions for mobilising private investment are to be created and the financing environment for young and innovative companies improved. Objective- and impact-oriented budget management and dovetailing of SDGs with the federal budget are key priorities of sustainable fiscal policy. Germany is a reliable partner in international development and climate finance and supports a needs-based reform of the international financial architecture. It is also striving in the EU and international working groups to promote climate-related aspects and to develop suitable financing instruments abroad.

Research, innovation and the digital transformation are key levers for achieving the SDGs. The potential of innovation and progress is to have a greater focus on sustainability. Moreover, systemic and mission-oriented approaches are to be used in research and innovation policy, the agility of innovation policy is to be increased and the promotion of innovation transfer improved. The digital transformation is to be used as a transformation accelerator for greater sustainability. It is shaping our society to an increasing degree and poses both opportunities and challenges. The aim is, among

other things, to put a nationwide gigabit infrastructure in place using modern cable-laying methods. Initiatives to promote green information and communications technology (ICT) and to regulate artificial intelligence (AI) systems are being taken at EU level. Civil society must be strengthened when it comes to shaping the framework conditions for the digital transformation, gender equality and diversity in science. Long-term cooperation and close dialogue with international stakeholders from partner countries are important with a view to understanding and responding to the positive and negative impacts of innovation at an early stage.

Key priorities in the area of **international sustainability policy** are the commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda at multilateral level and strengthening global and bilateral alliances and partnerships. Focuses here include combating the climate and environmental crisis and its impacts, alleviating humanitarian emergencies, strengthening global health and global food security and reducing poverty and inequality within and between countries, in addition to maintaining peace and security. With a view to combating the climate and environmental crisis, Article 2 (1) (c) of the Paris Agreement and targets 14 and 18 of the Global Biodiversity Framework contain statements regarding a climate- and biodiversity-friendly approach to financial flows. Germany’s development policy addresses the causes of crises and conflicts. With its priorities, it makes an important contribution to a global structural policy that promotes a socially just and environmental sustainability transformation. Negative spillover effects of internal policies must be identified and avoided. Policy measures must be designed in such a way that positive interrelationships are taken into account not only at national level, but also across borders. Education to promote sustainable development and global learning is also being supported with a view to involving young people and increasing acceptance for a comprehensive sustainability transformation.

Germany is working to improve the dovetailing of the 2030 Agenda with other global processes. Support is provided, for example, for the convening of and ongoing preparatory process for the 4th United Nations (UN) International Conference on Financing for Development, which addresses key issues such as the global debt architecture, international tax cooperation, private-sector mobilisation and the future of international development cooperation. Germany supports the United Nations System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation launched in July 2024, in addition to monitoring of SDG 6, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Water, the UN Water Conference scheduled for 2026 and a participatory preparatory process. It will also lend its support to the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations. Illegal financial flows, money laundering and terrorist financing must be combated and the capacity of global, regional and national partners to tackle illicit financial flows must be strengthened.

Governance and monitoring

Sustainability governance in Germany encompasses the structures within the German Government for governing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating its sustainability policy. This also includes continuously improving the assessment of the impact of laws and regulations on Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability governance ensures the participation of the various stakeholders and ongoing dialogue with the scientific community. The political targets and indicators for measuring the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda are a key component of governance. They will be reviewed and adapted once again in line with current developments, taking the social dimension into particular account. At the same time, the GSDS acknowledges the need for a further review and adaptation of sustainability governance.

Sustainable development is a task for society as a whole and requires the participation of all of society's stakeholders. **Social mobilisation and participation** contribute to a robust civil society and a vibrant democracy. Within the federal structures of the Federal Republic of Germany, the *Länder* (federal states) and the municipalities play an important role in planning and implementing sustainability activities. All levels of government bear joint responsibility for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda both in and with Germany. Furthermore, civil society engagement is important, as is the work of associations and the contribution made by science. Shaping just sustainable development together is an opportunity for us to lay the groundwork for a better future and is the core objective of this GSDS.

Introduction

In November 2022, the German Government took up the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), which was last adopted in 2021, with a Policy Decision and is now comprehensively updating it under the lead responsibility of the Federal Chancellery in collaboration with all of the ministries.

The further development of the GSDS sets out the objective, guiding principle and global framework for Germany's path towards sustainable development (chapter [A.I.](#) and [A.II.](#)) and provides an overview of the priorities of the GSDS – Shaping the transformation fairly together ([chapter A.III.](#)).

The areas of transformation highlighted by the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) for achieving the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the 2030 Agenda require particular action in the form of an integrated and holistic approach. The areas of transformation are therefore the focus of the efforts to further develop the GSDS. The six areas of transformation ([chapter B.](#)) clearly highlight synergies and conflicts within the SDGs and focus on concrete needs for change.

In order to ensure a systemic policy analysis and design – i.e. a policy that takes into account the interrelationships, dependencies and dynamics arising from the interconnected nature of political institutions, social groups and natural resources – the GSDS also describes governance with reference to five levers that are crucial to accelerating the transformation in all areas (cf. [chapter C.](#)).

This focus helps to strengthen the GSDS in its capacity as an overarching guiding principle for policies promoting sustainable development and jointly shaping the transformation in an equitable manner.

Cross-border impacts of our national actions on the rest of the world, also known as spillover effects, are integrated into the GSDS as a cross-cutting approach and are therefore addressed in a separate section in each chapter.

Last but not least, information is provided on the next steps ([chapter D.](#)) in addition to an [overview of the content and governance of the GSDS](#) (Sustainability Management System), including a summary of the targets and indicators used to measure progress.¹

¹ The further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy does not prejudice public budgets or the budgets of social security schemes. Any additional funding requirements stemming from the measures listed or from future measures arising from the same may, as a matter of principle, only be covered by the German Government if it has the requisite legislative and administrative authority. Moreover, these requirements must be covered by the corresponding departmental budgets within the applicable budgetary allocations and within the staffing plan when the respective federal budget is drawn up.

Chapter A. Sustainability as an opportunity

The **handprint** is a relatively new metaphor in the global discourse on sustainability. It emerged at a time when the environmental footprint, i.e. the pressure of industrial and consumer society on ecosystems, was on everyone's lips. The originator of the new term was Srijia from India, who was a ten-year-old girl at the time.

During an environmental education event for children that took place in Hyderabad, India, in 2005, Srijia found the constant talk about footprints to be tremendously negative. She spoke up and voiced her objections to this. In the ensuing discussion, the participants concluded that we should not only focus on the negative, destructive footprint, but should also turn our attention to the creative and constructive handprint. [...] This new metaphor aims to strengthen self-esteem. Yes, you are part of the problem. But you are also potentially part of the solution. The choice is yours. Save the planet!

Ulrich Grober, journalist, publicist, author; district of Köpenick, Berlin, on 2 September 2023

Living in a time of change – it's up to us

We are living in a world that is undergoing profound change. While this change cannot be stopped, it must be shaped fairly together. Doing this is literally up to all of us.

The aim is to set the political and social course for sustainable development, i.e. economically, environmentally and socially viable development, for all generations and all genders in Germany and around the world. The challenges facing us in this context are not only technical and economic in nature, but this is also a tremendous social, cultural and societal task. With the 2030 Agenda, the international community set itself common goals for the transformation to sustainability.

Entitled "Shaping the transformation fairly together", this updated version of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) takes into account all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. In this context, the GSDS places a particular focus on the social dimension, i.e. issues relating to social justice, social inclusion and universal participation.

As the international community faces intensified conflicts in the context of the fundamental challenges posed by climate change and low economic growth, and as increasing inequality in the distribution of social opportunities and a more pronounced polarisation of the democratic debate in Germany become apparent, social cohesion is playing an increasingly vital role in bringing about a successful transformation.

This transformation process depends on our ability to leverage the potential to influence developments in all areas of society – from civil society to business and science. If we manage to do this, then the transformation will also have integrative power.

To achieve this, everyone must pull in the same direction with courage, strength and confidence. This applies to the Federation, the *Länder* (federal states) and the municipalities, as well as to the European and international levels. Germany is well placed to manage this key transformation task and to use it as an opportunity to enhance prosperity, progress and innovative capacity.

I. Vision and guiding principle of the German Sustainable Development Strategy

The GSDS is the roadmap for a sustainable society in Germany. It was first presented at the United Nations (UN) World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and has since been regularly updated every four years. Since its update in 2016, the GSDS has been aligned with the common goals of the international community as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. The further development of the GSDS has been supported across all legislative terms.

A revised version was adopted in 2021 and confirmed in November 2022 with a Policy Decision. Its objectives were updated in line with the content of the coalition agreement for the 20th legislative term, “Daring more progress: an alliance for freedom, justice and sustainability”. This GSDS was updated as part of a comprehensive dialogue process with all sections of society (cf. [chapter C II.4.](#)). This process strengthened the effectiveness and binding nature of the GSDS.

1. Vision and goal

Sustainable development offers the opportunity of a good future for all. Since 2016, the GSDS has been based on a positive and comprehensive vision for a sustainable future in Germany and around the world with this in mind.

Vision

A “sustainable” Germany must be a progressive, innovative, open and liveable country.

It is characterised by a high quality of life and effective environmental protection. It is integrated, inclusive and excludes no one. Moreover, it creates opportunities for the equal participation of everyone in all areas and at all levels and fulfils its international responsibility.

German Sustainable Development Strategy, new edition 2016, p. 18

In order to achieve this vision, the GSDS is consistently aligned with the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals. These goals, summarised in the 2030 Agenda, represent a shared vision for a better world. They are based on universal human rights obligations and endeavour to secure the social, economic and environmental foundations for peaceful co-

existence in the long term and to steer the world towards a more just, more climate-friendly and more inclusive coexistence. A key part of this is the universal, whole-of-society approach and the promise to leave no one behind.

Quote from the dialogue:

“The UN Committee (on the Rights of the Child) has affirmed that every child has the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. This applies to children and young people all over the world, and must therefore also be a guiding principle for a sustainable child and youth policy in Germany.”

UNICEF

With this basic consensus of the international community, states have committed since 2015 to take concrete steps to resolve global and national challenges on the path towards sustainable development. The 17 global SDGs are therefore the benchmark against which all political decisions should be measured – whether at the global, European, national or local level. These goals apply not only to governments around the world, but also to civil society, business and science.

2. Guiding principle – our understanding of sustainability

In order to define the framework for action and the strategy’s objectives, this GSDS – building on the 1987 report by the Brundtland Commission – is based on a clear definition of sustainability.

A sustainable policy will meet the needs of present and future generations in equal measure – in Germany and in all regions of the world – and enable them to lead fulfilled and dignified lives.

The Federal Constitutional Court – intergenerational equity

In its landmark decision of 24 March 2021 on climate protection legislation in Germany, the Federal Constitutional Court emphasised the aspect of intergenerational equity. Referring to the national objective of environmental protection as laid down in Article 20a of the Basic Law, the Court underscored the duty of the state to ensure that burden-sharing between generations is not solely to the detriment of future generations.

Sustainability increases resilience to crises, i.e. the ability of systems and infrastructures to withstand pandemics, climate change and the many other challenges we face. A circular economy, for example, makes us less dependent on imports of raw materials while the expansion of renewable energies strengthens Germany’s energy sovereignty also in times of global conflict. Strengthened resilience can prevent new crises from arising or help to overcome them.

Definition of resilience

Resilience is the ability of a defined system to remain “undamaged” and stable in response to external disruption or to be able to resist (“crisis-proof”). The areas most often discussed in the context of resilience are anticipation, shock management and recovery, in addition to the protection and preservation of human development gains. Alongside the precautionary principle, democratic participation, and respect for environmental boundaries and human rights, resilience is thus often regarded as an important element of the guiding principle of sustainable development, and one that is currently becoming more prominent.

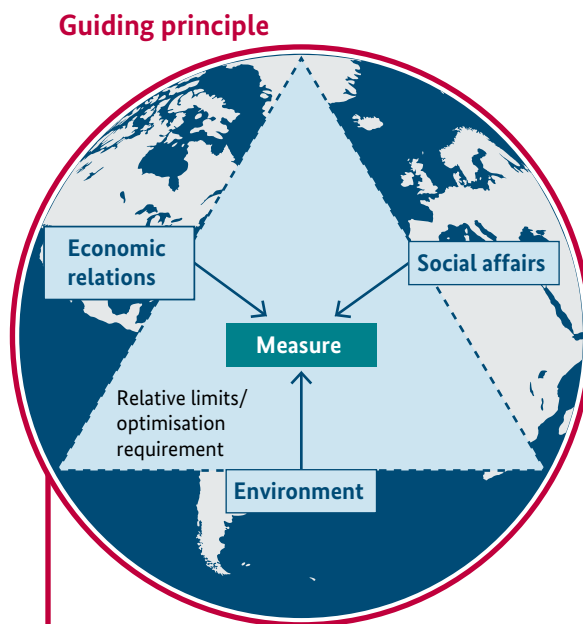
Based on this understanding of sustainable development, the guiding principle for sustainability policy is to harmonise the three dimensions of sustainable development consistently in all areas. Successful sustainable development must be

- economically efficient,
- socially balanced and
- environmentally sound
- for present and future generations
- in Germany and around the world.

The ultimate external constraints in this regard are

- planetary boundaries and
- a life in dignity for all (i.e. without poverty and hunger, with equal opportunities for the full development of one’s own potential).

Figure 1: The guiding principle for sustainability



Absolute limits:

- Conservation of the natural foundations for life in a global perspective
- A life in dignity for all

A number of planetary boundaries have currently been exceeded.

Climate and environmental justice play an important role in ensuring a life in dignity. They ensure that the burdens and opportunities of climate and environmental protection are fairly distributed and that particularly affected vulnerable groups are supported.

The impacts of our national policies on the rest of the world, which are also known as spillover effects, are also being integrated more closely into the GSDS as a cross-cutting approach. Our trade, consumption and production patterns, as well as our financial markets, can have negative or positive impacts on partner countries. One example is the destruction of nature caused by our demand for palm oil. It is therefore important to design measures from the outset in such a way that they do not hinder but strengthen the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals in other countries, especially those in the Global South.

3. Objectives, indicators and governance structure

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda can be measured thanks to a system of targets and indicators that is used to monitor the achievement of – for the most part quantified – targets with indicators. This increases their binding nature as well as transparency and thus supports political governance and corrective action (cf. [chapter C.I.](#) and, for a current evaluation of the achievement of objectives, dns-indikatoren.de/en/).

The guiding principle of reconciling the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental sustainability – requires an integrated and systemic approach that connects policy areas and considers them as a whole. This must also be taken into account in the GSDS governance structure. Particular emphasis is therefore placed on inter-ministerial cooperation. During the 20th legislative term, the German Government strengthened this by setting up seven interministerial project teams, known as transformation teams (cf. [chapter B](#) and [chapter C.I.1.](#)).

II. Global framework

We are undergoing a period of multiple and mutually reinforcing crises that pose considerable challenges for Germany and the international community. These challenges do not stop at borders. The global nature of these crises makes the need for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda even clearer.

Addressing these challenges requires a systemic, holistic approach, as set out in the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs provide concrete starting points for responding and at the same time pursuing long-term development goals.

The simultaneity of these crises makes addressing them at the political and societal level more difficult and helps to boost simplistic views that peddle a narrative that sustainability is about loss and frugality. In these times, more than ever, the 2030 Agenda offers a positive vision for Germany and the entire international community. It shows us the way to a better future with cities that are worth living in, clean air and rivers, affordable energy and mobility, good jobs and fair wages and less inequality.

The 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to develop solutions to these common challenges of the international community in order to facilitate sustainable development and therefore a dignified life for all people – including future generations – on the planet.

Sustainable development can only be achieved if all people are able to participate equally in social, political and economic life. However, despite progress in recent decades, people around the world still remain in poverty or are systematically discriminated against – be it because of their gender, age, religious affiliation or other characteristics. Marginalised groups suffer disproportionately from the impacts of current conflicts and crises due to structural discrimination. They must be key players in shaping and participating in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development have therefore developed their own guidelines and strategies for a feminist foreign and development policy. Moreover, Germany is hosting the third Global Disability Summit in Berlin in 2025 together with Jordan and the International Disability Alliance. As a unifying consensus, the 2030 Agenda has contributed to the successful conclusion of many multilateral agreements – such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022 and the High Seas Treaty in 2023.

Further groundbreaking agreements are to be concluded in the next few years. The aim is to strengthen the protection of nature and biodiversity, for example in land use, the use of pesticides and environmental impact assessments for marine use. Our economic systems and societies are embedded in the biosphere and depend on its conservation.

1. SDG Summit 2023: review and impact

At the SDG Summit in September 2023, at the mid-term of the 2030 Agenda, which was attended by more than 100 high-ranking government representatives, the international community took stock in a Political Declaration. It found that the implementation status of the SDGs is critical and that 85% of the measurable sub-targets are not “on track”, i.e. their achievement is too slow, stagnating or even regressing.

Multiple challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the COVID-19 pandemic, are making it more difficult to achieve the SDGs, also with a view to Europe. A large number of armed conflicts are undermining the implementation of the SDGs around the world. In particular, this includes Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and the resulting exacerbated energy and food crisis.

Preamble to the 2030 Agenda:

“There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development.”

The progress made despite numerous challenges shows that change is possible, however. In the Political Declaration from the 2023 SDG Summit, the international community committed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs by 2030. Forty-one countries – including Germany – have already followed the UN Secretary-General’s call to present national commitments for transformative action for a “rescue plan for people and planet”. This shows that the international community is continuing to stand by the 2030 Agenda and thus its promise for a common and better future. It also underscores the key importance of sustainable development financing for this purpose.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the framework for sustainable financing adopted by the UN at the same time as the 2030 Agenda, underlines the importance of sustainable development financing as a lever for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Its goals are therefore an important multilateral benchmark for achieving the SDGs. The forthcoming fourth international conference on financing for development is therefore of great importance.

2. Strengthening multilateral cooperation, global partnerships and international credibility

Solving global challenges requires not only strong national commitment, but also multilateral cooperation in particular.

The UN Summit of the Future held in September 2024 laid the groundwork for ambitious reforms in the coming years with the UN Pact for the Future. The pact provides important impetus for improving the structural conditions for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and strengthening the UN’s ability to act as well as the multilateral order. In 56 actions, the UN member states commit to greater cooperation in almost all areas of multilateralism. Together with Namibia, Germany played a decisive role in negotiating the Pact for the Future.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, United Nations Summit of the Future 2024, New York:

“A very important decision has been reached in the United Nations today. Multilateralism, the cooperation of the world’s nations on important issues for the future, has once again proved itself to be the real way to live together well.”

The 2030 Agenda is and remains a milestone of multilateralism. It strengthens multilateralism as it offers a common vision for the future of our world. The 2015 consensus on the 2030 Agenda is a central foundation of multilateral cooperation and a starting point for solving global problems, especially in today’s international political landscape.

Germany is committed to strengthening the multilateral system in international organisations and forums in a targeted manner. This is all the more important given the fact that the previously accepted understanding of the international order based on international law, the UN Charter and universal human rights is being called into question by a number of countries.

At the same time, a number of countries of the Global South² are criticising multilateral decision-making structures and international climate and development financing, which they consider to be insufficient. They are particularly hard hit by the impacts of various crises, which is why the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda is particularly important for these countries.

Germany is therefore focusing all the more on alliances and partnerships based on trust, global dialogue and cooperation founded on respect and the balancing of interests. Germany needs stable partnerships in order to be economically successful. Together with the European Union, Germany advocates human rights, democracy, sustainability and social standards, as well as gender justice and equality. It also actively participates in international negotiation and dialogue processes together with the other EU member states. Examples of this include the aforementioned UN Summit of the Future and the Hamburg Sustainability Conference. After all, credibility is fostered by coherent action, assuming international responsibility and continuously working towards fulfilling objectives, e.g. with respect to development, climate and biodiversity financing.

² To date, German development policy has assigned those countries to what is known as the “Global South”. They are part of the list of developing countries and territories of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and may therefore receive public funds for official development assistance (ODA). Furthermore, the term “Global South” may also include other countries, depending on the context.

III. Focuses of the 2025 GSDS – Shaping transformation fairly together

1. For a greenhouse gas-neutral, environmentally compatible Germany with an intact and diverse natural environment

a) Greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045 and adaptation to climate change

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2024, climate change and its impacts pose the greatest threat to prosperity and well-being as well as to social stability over the next ten years.

A key part of the fight against climate change is the reduction of greenhouse gases on the path to greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045. Significant changes to our energy system – with respect to generation/production, storage, distribution and consumption – are required to this end. Electricity generation from renewable energy sources must be further developed and integrated efficiently. The supply of renewable energies also requires an expansion of the corresponding infrastructure. A sustainable energy mix continues to comprise the use of green hydrogen.³ However, the building, transport, industrial and agricultural sectors also offer significant potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it is essential to keep natural CO₂ sinks in working order and, where necessary, to restore them. Our forests, soils and moors, river meadows and wetlands – as natural resources that convert and store CO₂ – are vitally important here. Without the natural sink functions of intact ecosystems and their conservation and strengthening, we cannot achieve our greenhouse gas reduction targets – neither at the national level, nor in Europe, nor internationally. Recent studies by the German National Forest Inventory have shown that German forests in particular were no longer able to fulfil their important sink function in the years 2018 to 2022, but have instead become a source of carbon emissions. The consistent strengthening and regeneration of natural sinks is therefore of great importance for climate action.

As emphasised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Sixth Assessment Report, technical solutions for removing CO₂ from the atmosphere can also contribute to the necessary continuous counterbalancing of residual emissions and, in addition, to the reduction of “overshoot” (e.g. direct air carbon capture and storage – DACCS) as negative emissions technologies.

In the future, all regions of Germany will be affected by a further rise in temperatures, an increase in heatwaves and

periods of drought and a heightened risk of heavy rainfall and flooding. With regard to the purely economic impacts of climate change, the evidence for structural losses in value added on a global scale in the double-digit percentage range of gross domestic product (GDP) is growing.

The Climate Adaptation Act (KAnG), which entered into force in July 2024, now obliges the Federation, *Länder* and municipalities to address the impacts of climate change across the board and to identify adaptation measures. The precautionary Climate Adaptation Strategy adopted in December 2024 presented for the first time a strategy with measurable targets for adaptation to the impacts of climate change in its area of responsibility.

b) Conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity

In addition to climate change, the progressive loss of biodiversity is the most serious and most far-reaching environmental change worldwide.

Biodiversity

The biodiversity crisis affects a number of SDGs – in particular SDGs 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land) – as well as various areas of transformation and levers. References to biodiversity can therefore be found throughout the 2025 GSDS.

Biodiversity encompasses the diversity of animal and plant species, including intra-species diversity, as well as the diversity of forms of community and biotopes. It is not only an invaluable asset in itself, but a necessary condition for human existence. About 75% of global food crops rely on animal pollination, for example. Without clean air, filtered water and healthy soils, we could not survive. Economic activities would be impossible without building materials and many other natural raw materials, and without rest and recreation in nature and natural medicinal products, healthy life and well-being would be inconceivable. Moreover, intact nature in all its diversity in marine, coastal, freshwater, forest and agricultural ecosystems provides natural climate protection and can protect us from natural events such as droughts, floods and landslides.

With the loss of biodiversity, natural ecosystem services are irretrievably lost. Preserving, restoring and sustainably managing nature and its diversity is therefore not only an end in itself, but a form of life insurance for us and our duty towards future generations. The German Government is strongly advocating this at international, European and national level. It is therefore committed

³ In order to facilitate the necessary rapid ramp-up of hydrogen production, the Import Strategy also includes low-carbon hydrogen and its derivatives in the effort to meet demand.

to taking biodiversity protection sufficiently into account in the respective areas of transformation as an original component of sustainability.

With the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, new global targets for biodiversity protection have been in place since December 2022, which the German Government is implementing at the national level with the National Strategy on Biological Diversity 2030 (NBS 2030). At the same time, the NBS 2030 is contributing to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. NBS 2030 is the German Government's key nature protection strategy, pooling objectives and measures at federal level and thus forming the strategic framework for the German Government's nature conservation policy.

The biodiversity and climate crises are closely related, mutually reinforcing and must also be tackled together. The Federal Action Plan on Nature-Based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity, adopted by the German Government in March 2023, aims to improve the contribution of ecosystems to climate protection while protecting biodiversity. The German Government will invest more than 3.5 billion euro in protecting and restoring nature by 2028.

The German Government also supports partner countries in the development and implementation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), for example via the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership. In total, the German Government provided 1.36 billion euro for the conservation of species and ecosystems in developing and emerging countries in 2023. Germany is therefore a reliable partner in the area of international biodiversity financing. The EU Regulation on Nature Restoration, a milestone for nature conservation in Europe, entered into force in August 2024. In order to achieve the objectives of the regulation in Germany, the German Government will now draw up a national recovery plan based on the contributions of the *Länder* and will develop further measures for marine, coastal, freshwater, forest and agricultural ecosystems in order to restore our natural environment in Germany.

Climate change exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems and reduces their resilience to existing human influences. Intact ecosystems are needed more than ever – also as a buffer against the impacts of the climate crisis, for example by absorbing floods and cooling temperatures during heatwaves. That is why it is so vital to think of both crises as two

sides of the same coin, to find joint solutions, and to ensure that the measures taken to combat them do not contradict each other. Nature-based climate action measures can develop synergies to a particular extent here.

The National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) has been the key nature conservation strategy and instrument for implementing international and European agreements since 2007. With the updated version of the NBS for the period up to 2030 (NBS 2030), which was adopted by the cabinet on 18 December 2024, all key issues relating to biodiversity protection will be pooled under one strategic roof and the polluters responsible for the ongoing loss of biodiversity will be addressed. In addition to new objectives, the focus of NBS 2030 is on improved implementation.

Our water resources are also coming under increasing pressure as a result of climate change. In Germany, water management faces major challenges with respect to modernising and adapting its infrastructures and as far as watercourse protection is concerned. Water is the basis of all forms of life. The National Water Strategy systematically ensures a more conscious approach to this irreplaceable resource for nature and humanity, so that water remains safe and affordable everywhere in the future.

c) Tackling the pollution crisis

The impacts on humans and the environment of the global pollution crisis caused by pollutants and waste is putting our natural heritage at risk. The present update of the GSDS therefore devotes a separate chapter to a “Pollutant-free environment” (cf. [chapter B.VI.](#)). Patterns of trade, production and consumption also contribute to environmental pollution, which is known as the third planetary crisis (alongside climate change and biodiversity loss).

Sustainable, circular economic management, innovation and sustainable consumption, as well as sufficiency, are key to combating the pollution crisis and the other environmental crises. Measures facilitating sufficiency greatly reduce energy and resource requirements. At the same time, they can improve the quality of life in the region (e.g. by redesigning public spaces and with repair and loan infrastructure in neighbourhoods) and reduce economic dependencies on raw materials and energy sources.

d) Climate and environmental justice

The objective of environmental justice, which is actively pursued by the German Government as well as by the *Länder* and municipalities, is to create healthy environmental and living conditions for all across the various ministries and thus to promote climate action, health protection and social justice together.

Climate and environmental justice takes into account the emergence of climate and environmental damage, as well as the extent to which individuals and countries are affected. On average, people with low incomes have been shown to contribute less to environmental damage than wealthier individuals. The greenhouse gas emissions of households rise on average with increasing incomes. Households whose incomes are among the highest ten percent cause about two and a half times more harmful emissions in Germany than households whose incomes are among the lowest ten percent. Similarly, countries' contribution to climate change depends on their level of industrialisation and economic strength. The impact of environmental pollution, on the other hand, is more likely to affect people with lower incomes, who have poorer access to health-promoting environmental resources and measures to adapt to climate change. The extent to which they are affected is due, for example, to the location of apartments on noisy streets or in very densely developed residential areas, which heat up particularly strongly during heatwaves and have a lack of green spaces. This housing situation reduces residents' quality of life and can have a negative impact on their physical and mental health. Children, pregnant women, people with disabilities and those with pre-existing medical conditions, i.e. vulnerable groups in particular, which may include older people depending on the situation, are in need of protection. Environmental pollution also has a strong impact on the rights of children to play, free time and recreation.

Also around the world, marginalised groups suffer disproportionately from the impacts of current conflicts and crises, as well as from the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, as a consequence of structural discrimination. They must be involved in helping to implement the 2030 Agenda as key stakeholders in line with the principle of "leaving no one behind".

2. Promoting a just Germany where no one is left behind

a) Strengthening the social dimension of sustainability

The social dimension is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, which seeks to find solutions that leave no one behind. This international postulate is also a benchmark both for and in Germany.

Stand concerning the social dimension at the Sustainability Forum – key priorities of the participants:

- Sustainability should be made tangible ("clothes swap at the library").

- People should be empowered to act sustainably in everyday life ("food consumption in nursing homes").
- Meaningful participation on the ground ("in gymnasiums") is required in order to reach different walks of life.
- Continuity of measures is essential in order to build confidence and deliver tangible results ("Living well in Germany", which was discontinued at the time).

Germany has strong foundations for sustainable development with its social security system. These foundations must be preserved and further developed. The citizen's benefit was introduced in 2023 with this in mind (cf. [chapter B.I.2.b](#)), thereby strengthening the social dimension of sustainable development.

At the same time, in times of multiple and interconnected crises, the social impacts of these crises must be taken even more into account. After all, losses of prosperity as a result of crises impact lower-income households in particular. These and other socially disadvantaged groups have reduced ability to adapt, which is a key prerequisite for coping with transformation processes. The main priority is therefore to make these adaptation processes socially just. This objective is achieved, for example, by introducing a social monitoring system for climate protection (cf. [chapter B.II.](#)).

Improved structural integration of the sustainability dimensions is crucial. The social dimension of sustainability has therefore been taken into consideration consistently in all areas of transformation – and not only in "Human well-being and capabilities; social justice" (cf. [chapter B.I.](#)). Strategies, funding guidelines and measures of the German Government are to be consistently designed in a socially compatible manner that ensures intergenerational justice and gender equality.

The increasing need to reduce inequalities in the spirit of SDG 10 and to take the social dimension into consideration in all areas in equal measure does not end at national borders. Germany is also working at the international level to reduce social inequalities both within the framework of German development cooperation and with international partners. For instance, Germany is supporting various initiatives taken by Brazil during its G20 Presidency to tackle extreme inequality and to combat hunger. One focus, among other things, is on the fair design of progressive tax systems, the greater involvement of highly wealthy individuals and global tax cooperation.

b) Social justice

An important principle of social justice is equal opportunities. It is important to compensate for unequal opportunities for starting out in life and to give people the necessary opportunities to fulfil their potential and offer them a good quality of life.

In addition to equal fundamental rights, social justice therefore addresses access to education, healthcare and the labour market, as well as democratic participation and the distribution of income and wealth.

In order to promote social justice, it is important to break down the persistently strong correlation between educational and earnings potential and social origin in Germany. For example, only half as many children from non-academic households as from academic households gain a university entrance qualification certificate.

In addition to the parents' educational background, income and wealth distribution in Germany also create unequal opportunities. Both the provision of learning materials and support in the form of tutoring, participation in cultural programmes and sports clubs and their nutritional and free time circumstances have a bearing on their mental, social and physical development and thus their participation in education. Since wealth is primarily inherited, it cannot be assumed that this inequality will be reduced in the future.

A range of measures to strengthen formal and informal education at all stages of life and also in basic, further and continuing training has therefore been launched (cf. [chapter B.I.](#)).

Thanks to the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG), those in training, i.e. students and school pupils, can pursue (initial) training in accordance with their skills and interests, regardless of their social and economic background. Moreover, the *Startchancen* programme was adopted, which is aimed at schools with a high proportion of socially disadvantaged individuals (cf. [chapter B.I.2.](#)). The programme seeks to decouple educational success from social origins.

Income structure also has a bearing on social justice. The minimum wage was increased to 12.82 euro (from 1 January 2025) following a proposal by the Minimum Wage Commission. Raising the minimum wage also has a positive impact on the size of the low-wage sector as a whole. In April 2023, there were 1.1 million fewer low-wage jobs than one year previously. Improving collective agreements is also an important lever with a view to strengthening fair and good wages (cf. [section f on social partnerships](#) and [chapter B.I.](#)).

Quote from the dialogue:

"It is now becoming clear that acceptance of these change processes is becoming increasingly strained. This is particularly the case where there have been no noticeable improvements in living and working conditions, where existing injustices are deepened and uncertainties are intensified.

Against this backdrop, the promotion of social participation, social cohesion, gender equality and international solidarity is more important than ever.

Reliable and sustainable prospects are required, as well as proactive, forward-looking and innovative policies before value chains break down irretrievably. To this end, strengthening industrial value added is just as important as enhancing and expanding good services and organising unpaid care and housework in a gender-equitable manner."

German Trade Union Confederation

Social justice includes eliminating all forms of discrimination and inequality of opportunity, for example on the basis of gender, health restrictions or affiliation with ethnic, religious or cultural minorities (cf. also the following [section e\) on social inclusion and participation](#) as well as [chapter B.I.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#)).

This requires committing to and working towards the objective of gender equality (SDG 5). Gender equality should be integrated into all policy areas in the development and implementation of measures in order to tackle gender discrimination. (cf. [chapter B.I.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#)).

The supreme federal authorities themselves serve as a model in this regard. With "Plan FÜPo 2025" (leadership positions 2025 plan), the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth launched an interministerial process that is intended to advance the equal participation of men and women in the public service of the Federation. With the laws seeking to increase the number of women in management positions (the Gender Equality (Management Positions) Act and the Second Act of the same name – FÜPoG and FÜPoG II), the Federation also makes provisions for increasing the proportion of women in management levels and in private-sector bodies as well as companies in which the Federation holds a direct majority stake. Women continue to be underrepresented in supervisory and executive boards. A paradigm shift is required in companies, and women must be promoted and encouraged in a targeted manner.

Germany approved the EU Directive improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures in 2022. The aim of the Directive is to substantially increase the proportion of women in the management levels of listed companies in the EU. The objective is to achieve the target of 40% women in supervisory boards or a total of 33% in supervisory and executive boards.

The expansion of all-day schooling and daycare for children, with a view to introducing the legal right to all-day care from the school year 2026/27, as well as further improving the compatibility of family, nursing and employment, is also intended to improve equal opportunities.

The worldwide enforcement of the rights of women and girls is a major lever for sustainable development (cf. [chapter C.V.](#)).

People with disabilities must also have the same opportunities to participate equally in social life and to be able to help shape the social transformation. The sentence “No person shall be disadvantaged because of disability” was added to Article 3 of the Basic Law 30 years ago. Moreover, Germany ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 15 years ago.

Integration assistance for people with disabilities has been gradually refocused since 2018 with the Federal Participation Act (BTHG). Under this reform, integration assistance is to be systematically provided on a people-centred basis in order to enable people with disabilities to lead even more autonomous lives. The Accessibility Reinforcement Act (BFSG) also improves the equal and non-discriminatory participation of people with disabilities and restrictions and older people. It is achieving this, for example, by requiring online products to be designed in an accessible manner effective from June 2025. This ranges from computer hardware to e-books and banking services. A great deal remains to be done, however, such as the reform of the Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (BGG). Inclusion and accessibility must be seen as cross-cutting issues that affect all areas of transformation and all of the SDGs.

Everyone should have the same opportunities and obligations in our society. Education and employment are therefore also important components of successful integration.

In October 2023, for example, together with the Federal Employment Agency, the *Job-Turbo* initiative was launched in order to increase support for refugees receiving citizen’s benefit in taking up employment swiftly and in the long term. Around 200,000 of the refugees addressed by this initiative have started work since then.

In addition to the *Job-Turbo* initiative and integration courses, counselling services for migrants and diverse projects in various social areas (e.g. the Integration through Sport programme together with the German Olympic Sports Confederation, cf. also [chapter C.II.](#)) strengthen the sense of belonging and participation of the people coming to our country.

Comprehensive measures to reduce irregular migration are in place on the basis of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration. Moreover, the aim is to increase the number of repatriations of persons who do not have protection status in Germany. This includes drawing up migration partnerships in compliance with human rights standards that aim to achieve long-term, comprehensive cooperation with the countries of origin. This encompasses cooperation in the field of repatriation as well as the promotion of the migration of skilled workers.

Comprehensive measures such as the Civic Coding initiative (cf. [chapter B.I.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#), as well as the [transformation report of 23 August 2023](#)) help to strengthen inter-generational equity and to give people of all ages the same opportunities to fulfil their socioeconomic needs and ensure their involvement in participatory processes and social life.

Example: Civic Coding – Innovation Network Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the Common Good

The Civic Coding – Innovation Network AI for the Common Good initiative is spearheaded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Among other things, it works to strengthen the data and AI skills of civil society and promotes a social, participatory and sustainable technology. It strengthens the digital skills of society so that all people can use AI technology independently and safely.

Measures must take individual conditions and circumstances into account in order to be targeted.

Important components therefore include the active involvement of target groups in the design and implementation of measures, an active approach to individuals via what are known as “proactive measures”, participatory approaches in research, and a communications strategy that increasingly addresses target groups in a cross-sectoral and networked manner.

c) Equivalent living conditions

Economically strong regions that are worth living in throughout Germany are indispensable pillars not only for sustainable growth, but in particular also for secure jobs, economic prosperity, social cohesion and a robust democracy. That is why it is important to strengthen equivalent living conditions in all regions, as well as to safeguard these in the long term. Against this backdrop, the first report on the convergence of living standards was published in 2024. It uses a broad set of indicators and a survey of the population's views on this issue to assess current living conditions and track the development of living conditions at town, city and district level in Germany. In addition, the report on the convergence of living standards contains the results of the first overall impact analysis and evaluation of the Federal Funding System for Structural Development Regions, which comprises all of the Federation's funding programmes for the regions.

The central component of this support system is the joint task of the Federation and the *Länder* of improving regional economic structures, which was overhauled in 2022. This reform has, among other things, adjusted the objectives set, placed a stronger focus on regional value chains, created additional incentives for climate-friendly investments and expanded funding opportunities.

d) Social cohesion and a robust and strong democracy

Social cohesion comes under pressure when social justice is not sufficiently guaranteed (cf. [chapter A.II.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#)). Social cohesion is essential for jointly shaping the economic and social task of development towards a sustainable community.

Stakeholders that promote cohesion are not only entities at state and municipal level. Social stakeholders, including in the spheres of science, sport, culture, community associations and volunteers, are also of great importance (cf. [chapter C.II.](#)). They can serve as a bridge and act as a counterweight, for example with regard to closed-off echo chambers on social media. They bring people together – also across borders – as well as strengthen cohesion and mutual understanding.

Cohesion in society is also about the fair treatment of minorities; it is therefore necessary to support people's active participation in our liberal democracy, as they help shape it and stand up for it as a whole above and beyond their personal interests. Social cohesion in Germany depends not least on cultivating shared democratic values and engaging in knowledge-based, open and respectful democratic debate.

Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz, presentation of the German Dream Award on 30 November 2023:

“Our common ‘we’ does not differentiate between a person who has or does not have an immigration background, and our personal appearance and our beliefs also do not matter. I firmly believe that this ‘we’ represents the vast majority of people in our country who are committed to our liberal order and espouse its values.”

Even though we have a broad social consensus in Germany – across many social groups, generations and personal circumstances – efforts must be made time and again to maintain and foster this consensus.

We must therefore firmly oppose positions that are exclusive, extremist and inhumane – in Germany and throughout the world. Promoting civic education and fostering education for democratic citizenship, among other things, play a key role here. Social cohesion and trust in the state and democracy can also be strengthened through other political initiatives: measures to reduce social inequality; the provision of high-quality, regionally comparable public services; well-functioning public institutions at federal, *Land* and municipal level with appropriate human and financial resources; reliable political and financial support for civil society structures that are dedicated to promoting democracy and sustainability, including in youth work.

Social cohesion in a society, and thus the resilience of democracies, depends not only on perceived social justice (especially with regard to the distribution of wealth and incomes), but also on citizens' sense of security. This includes economic fears as well as fears relating to internal and external security. If the feeling of shared security decreases, this brings with it not only a decline in trust in the military, police and the judiciary, but also a lowering of general trust in state institutions and the rule of law, which in turn results in less social cohesion.

The fact that populist parties are seeking to reframe the discourse on displacement and migration so that it is no longer viewed as a humanitarian or political challenge, but instead as a threat to internal security, has played a major role in increasing fear and uncertainty.

In fact, Germany is one of the safest countries in the world; it protects citizens from violence, crime and terrorism, and it protects our constitutional order. On 14 June 2023, Germany adopted its first National Security Strategy, entitled “Robust.

Resilient. Sustainable. Integrated Security for Germany”, which serves as Germany’s overarching security policy document. Its aim is for the country to become more robust in all areas of life and to ensure that we can live in peace, freedom and security also in the future.

Capable diplomacy and defence policy, crisis prevention, stabilisation, peace building, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation are each important for integrated security in different ways (cf. also [chapter C.V.](#)). The prime objective is crisis prevention. In addition to deterrence and defence by the Bundeswehr, effective and verifiable arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament also contribute to our security.

e) Social inclusion and participation

The promotion of social participation seeks to improve active participation by all people in Germany in social life and the democratic community. Increased social participation also leads to more social justice. A prerequisite for people making meaningful use of improved life opportunities is the provision of appropriate social security. Conversely, using one’s life opportunities, for example by securing qualified employment, also strengthens the stability of social security systems. The above-mentioned reduction of all forms of discrimination and inequality of opportunity is another prerequisite for social participation by those affected (cf. previous sections [b](#) and [c](#), as well as [chapter B.I.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#)).

Greater social participation promotes the development of individual potential in dignity and enables us to make the best possible use of this potential. This strengthens all areas of social and economic life.

Kick-off conference on the further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy on 19 October 2023:

“What we also need here is, so to speak, implementation at the level of society, by each and every one of us. We need changes in behaviour – 80 million of them. And for this change in behaviour to be worth it, I need a motivation that I can understand. Why should I change my previous behaviour that I’ve grown accustomed to?”

Gunda Röstel, Deputy Chair, Council for Sustainable Development

Improved participation also strengthens citizens’ commitment to shaping the transformation. Citizens who play an active part in shaping a sustainable community thereby lay the social groundwork for the transformation (cf. [chapter B.I.](#) and [chapter C.II.](#)). To this end, it is important to involve

people from all backgrounds, including young people and groups that are less likely to participate, more intensively and at an earlier stage in all areas of sustainability policy, with the help of citizen participation. Formats of youth participation must be implemented in a structured manner and in accordance with the quality standards for child and youth participation.

At the same time, voluntary and civic engagement is needed in order to address the current societal challenges. Particularly in disadvantaged and rural regions, volunteer networks and engagement structures are sometimes underdeveloped and, what is particularly important, threatened by demographic change.

With a view to promoting volunteering, the German Foundation for Civic Engagement and Volunteer Work was created in 2020 to serve as a central point of contact at federal level. It provides specific assistance for all questions relating to the practical issues of volunteering, implements various funding and advisory programmes, and actively supports the networking and professionalisation of volunteers.

f) Social partnerships and opportunities for participation in the workplace

An important opportunity for people in Germany to participate directly in the workplace is employee participation. This core element in the system of worker representation has a long history in Germany and allows employees to actively address and initiate change. Employees initiate important transformation processes in their companies and thus help to shape and drive forward innovation.

Example: Transformation Guides

The Transformation Guides (*Transformationslotsen*) project is based on a joint initiative of trade unions and employers. Thanks to support from the Vocational Training School of the Lower Saxony Business Association and the Education Association for Work and Life, employees are provided with the means to independently train themselves to become specialists in the field of digital transformation and change management. After attaining this qualification, they can further develop processes in their respective companies and serve as points of contact for colleagues in matters relating to digitalisation and transformation.

Being able to help shape your working environment also helps strengthen democratic society and promote cooperation across generations, bringing benefits beyond the specific

workplace. It has been shown that commitment and employee participation lead to greater acceptance of a diverse workforce in companies.

Social partnership and participation are genuine success factors for Germany as a business location. They have contributed to significant social achievements and to a fairer distribution of wealth. A strong, functioning social partnership, harnessing and strengthening the possibilities for employee participation and more collective agreements, especially also in eastern Germany, are needed in order to successfully shape Germany's future, as well as to successfully tackle future crises. Thanks to collective agreements, working conditions can be guaranteed permanently, in a future-proof way and through worker participation (cf. [chapter B.I.](#)). The importance of collective agreements for sustainable development is reflected by the new relevant indicator in the strategy (indicator no. 8.5.c.).

Participation, cohesion and justice must be implemented jointly as the social dimension of sustainability. Each and every individual plays a role in shaping these developments. Sustainable development can therefore only succeed if it is shaped with the involvement of citizens.

3. Promoting sustainable prosperity in Germany through innovative and sustainable economic activities

Sustainable development also means creating sustainable growth and thus prosperity in the future. Ensuring that Germany is a strong centre of industry, with well-qualified and well-paid workers, is an important prerequisite to this end.

Stand concerning the social market economy at the Sustainability Forum – key priorities:

- Prosperity indicators outside GDP should be communicated to the public to a greater degree.
- Guidelines are needed for the approach to environmental services in cost-benefit analyses.
- A greater emphasis on taxes is required as an instrument of control for avoiding environmental costs (and redistribution of revenue).
- There must be a greater emphasis on sufficiency measures that are not a question of “frugality”, as is often claimed. There are also sufficiency measures

such as more durable products that could certainly become a business model (“quality rather than quantity”).

- An impact assessment of reporting obligations under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) should be carried out. Do the advantages outweigh its disadvantages (administrative burden)?

a) Technology, talents and tolerance

Solutions for sustainability require experimental spaces, infrastructures and technological innovations. Good framework conditions and an even stronger focus on sustainability with the precautionary principle in mind are vital.

IT, data and transport infrastructure are important framework conditions and at the same time multipliers for sustainable development. They help to make Germany attractive as a location for business. Their design has a direct impact on the achievement of the SDGs. In terms of climate and resource conservation, for example, digitalisation by means of intelligent control of devices, facilities, processes and networks means contributing to saving energy; at the same time, energy and resource consumption is continuing to rise as a result of this. It is important to identify these interrelationships, to exploit potential and to keep on reducing adverse impacts, including through research and innovation.

An excellent research landscape, broad-based funding for innovation and start-ups and innovative spirit are important springboards for forward-looking technological developments that facilitate greater sustainability (cf. [chapter C.IV.](#)). The potential of research and innovation policy across scientific fields must be exploited to an even greater extent in order to promote sustainability. The goal that the state and the economy combined spend 3.5% of GDP on research and development remains crucial for the expansion of future-oriented investments. Universities and non-university research institutions play an important transfer function in these processes between research and business.

Key technologies are vital to value added and employment opportunities in Germany. They must be continually developed and new technologies added to the mix. Good framework conditions are required to this end. Targeted technological advances in the decarbonisation of industry, such as the development of and investment in innovative climate protection technologies, are therefore required ([chapter B.II.2.b](#)). Furthermore, the research and development activities of companies are supported via the further improvement of the tax research allowance implemented by the Growth Opportunities Act and by testing innovative technologies

and business models. In this way, the expertise and application of important key technologies can be retained in Germany and new technologies acquired. Germany is thus being strengthened as an attractive location with good jobs. All of these efforts increase the technological sovereignty of Germany and the European Union.

It is also crucial for Germany's innovative capacity and performance to safeguard and expand its excellent pool of skilled labour (cf. [chapter B.I.2.a](#)). Options for basic and further training have been improved considerably with the implementation of the Skilled Labour Strategy. With basic and further training, we are qualifying skilled workers for the currently changing requirements and preparing them for future qualification requirements. Particular attention is paid to digital and data skills within the framework of the digital transformation.

The National Skills Strategy pools vocational and work-related training measures to maintain and expand employability and to safeguard individual development and career prospects. Lifelong learning and further training are becoming ever more important as a changing world increasingly requires adaptation and new skills. With *Lebenschancen-BAföG* (Life Chances BAföG), a new funding instrument is being assessed that supports self-determined continuing education. The Continuing Education Act introduces a training guarantee and the funding instruments of labour market policy for the further training of employees are being strengthened considerably once again. Beyond career development, lifelong learning up until old age is being promoted in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) programme Lifelong Learning and Volunteering (*Bildung und Engagement ein Leben lang*, BELL).

Scientific (continuing) training is particularly important as it enables graduates to deal with an uncertain future and to come up with innovations as well as to engage in critical reflection on the basis of scientific principles.

Increasing participation in the labour force and improving the quality of work are further areas of action of the Skilled Labour Strategy. It is important to make better use of domestic potential in the light of labour market needs.

Moreover, further immigration of foreign skilled workers is required. Only as a cosmopolitan society will we be able to safeguard our prosperity and quality of life. The Act and the Regulation on the Further Development of Skilled Immigration expanded the legal scope for skilled workers from abroad to take up employment once again considerably. The aim now is to continue to cut red tape, digitalise and accelerate still further the procedures that this involves. A genuine culture of welcome and recognition at all levels as well as anti-discrimination work is also required with a view to the immigration of skilled workers from abroad.

Spillover effect: brain drain

In other countries, the emigration of skilled workers can also have development-related impacts such as a loss of human capital, staffing shortages and a deterioration in the quality of care. In order to avoid what is known as brain drain, the Skilled Labour Strategy takes into account international principles and guidelines for the ethically responsible recruitment of skilled workers. One example of this is the Triple Win programme, which promotes a holistic approach that benefits both host countries and countries of origin as well as the migrants themselves. In the interests of a sustainable and fair process, we cooperate with countries that have a surplus of trained care workers. Since 2013, some 5400 nursing staff and 430 trainees have travelled to Germany and a further 2600 people are attending language courses in the partner countries.

In addition, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development advises partner governments on shaping a development-oriented migration policy in line with the needs of the respective country (e.g. professions experiencing shortages, the profile of the unemployed population, growth sectors, the use of remittances, protection against precarious working conditions, fair and ethical recruitment, the protection of people in vulnerable situations) and how they can create incentives to avoid brain drain and to harness the economic benefits of regular migration for their economic development.

b) Further expanding sustainable and circular economic management

Corporate statutory due diligence contributes to the social and environmental dimension of sustainability. Statutory human rights and environmental due diligence in accordance with the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) are mandatory for the registered companies along their supply chains in all regions of the world. This approach is a direct contribution to achieving the SDGs around the world (cf. [chapter B.I.](#)).

The key challenge is to design the implementation of due diligence obligations in practice to be as unbureaucratic as possible and to promote this in such a way that entrepreneurial philosophy continues to give rise to responsible business conduct (RBC). This also applies to sustainability reporting within the framework of the EU's new Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

The German Sustainability Code, an initiative of the Sustainable Development Council, helps companies to get started with sustainability reporting. The objective is to significantly reduce the time and effort required, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. It is necessary to pursue fundamental processes to reduce bureaucratic burdens without jeopardising the objectives of the regulation.

With its large procurement volume, the public administration can make an important contribution to the social-ecological transformation of the economy. By adhering to and calling for corporate due diligence obligations, it is intended to set a good example and to generate momentum for more sustainable supply chains on the part of companies.

The economic dimension of sustainable development also benefits from this transition and from the implementation of corporate due diligence. Sustainable corporate governance, including the implementation of human rights and environmental due diligence obligations, is not only intended to respect human rights and preserve natural resources, but it can also increase the resilience of companies and thus contribute to their own future viability. The vulnerability of supply chains in our economically interconnected world, which is also exposed to geopolitical changes and crises, has been clearly demonstrated in recent times. Social and environmental responsibility along the supply chain, which is focused on preventive risk management and comprises internal structures and processes to minimise risks and provide support, can help to reduce these vulnerabilities. Responsible entrepreneurial actions must be embedded in a structural policy geared towards achieving social balance to facilitate the transformation to increased sustainability for companies, industries, regions and households affected by particularly high adjustment costs (“just transition”).

Circular economic management that conserves resources and keeps them in circulation helps to reduce dependencies on international supply chains. The circular economy (cf. [chapter B.III.](#)) offers new potential for added value and employment and strengthens the economic dimension of sustainability. At the same time, it plays an important role

in conserving resources and protecting the landscape and mitigates the current pollution crises. It is thus vital to the conservation of biodiversity and to the path to greenhouse gas neutrality. Implementing a circular economy is therefore one of the most important challenges and at the same time poses an opportunity for sustainable development, which is why it has been identified as one of the six important areas of transformation in Germany (cf. [chapter B.III.](#)).

c) Alliance for Transformation

In the Alliance for Transformation (cf. also [chapter B.III.](#)) as an overarching dialogue format, leaders from industry, trade unions, associations, science and civil society will hold discussions on the key areas of transformation and joint measures to ensure that the transformation is successful.

Focuses include, for example, shortages of skilled workers, the circular economy and the acceleration of planning and approval procedures, as well as the expansion of renewable energies.

The alliance is designed as a cross-sectoral dialogue under the umbrella mission “Our prosperity in 2030: working together for sovereignty, value creation and resilience”, which takes into account current developments and combines the results of other government and dialogue formats. The aim is to jointly design the necessary transformation processes that are intended to make Germany greenhouse gas-neutral, advance the digital transformation and enhance the country’s resilience.

d) Transformation as an opportunity for prosperity

Sustainable development is an important aspect of the long-term response to the current crises and adaptation needs that Germany faces. It offers an opportunity to address social, environmental and economic challenges in a way that is forward-looking and balanced, thus creating good conditions for long-term sustainable prosperity.

The necessary change processes can be designed in an optimal manner through the collaboration of all stakeholders.

Chapter B. Areas of transformation

The six areas of transformation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), derived from the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, shed light on Germany’s priorities in the area of sustainable development. The levers that have been identified (cf. [chapter C.](#)) provide further points of departure for tangible government action.

The areas of transition clearly highlight synergies and conflicts within the SDGs and focus on concrete needs for change. As announced in the Policy Decision on the German Sustainable Development Strategy of November 2022, the areas of transformation are the focus of work within the framework of the GSDS during this legislative term.

Transformation teams (TT)

In order to promote active, targeted control of the transformation processes, transformation teams (TT) were set up for the areas of transformation and the “International responsibility and cooperation” lever in the form of temporary interministerial project groups (cf. [table 1](#) and [chapter C.I.](#)).

The project group work of the transformation teams is a concrete implementation of the whole-of-government approach, which considers holistic and interministerial action to be the key to successful transformation. In the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR, p. 48), the TTs were highlighted as a good practical example for strengthening internal government capacity in the areas of transformation.

Table 1: Overview of the transformation teams

TT	Topic	Lead ministries	Further members
TT1	Human well-being and capabilities, social justice	BMBF, BMAS, BMG	FFO, BMZ, BMFSFJ, BMJ, BMEL, BMUV
TT2	Energy transition and climate action	BMWK, BMUV, BMZ, FFO	BMDV, BMEL, BMBF, BMAS, BMWSB, FFO
TT3	Circular economy	BMUV, BMWK	BMZ, BMBF, BMEL, BMI, BMJ, BMDV, BMWSB
TT4	Sustainable construction and sustainable mobility	BMWSB, BMWK, BMUV	BMDV, BMBF, BMEL, BMZ, BKM
TT5	Sustainable agricultural and food systems	BMEL, BMUV	BMBF, BMZ, AA, BMG, BMWK
TT6	Pollutant-free environment	BMUV, BMEL	BMBF, BMZ, BMWK
TT7	International responsibility and cooperation	BMZ, BMUV, FFO	BMWSB, BMEL

Involving different social actors and what is known as the dialogue group (cf. [chapter C.](#)), the work of the transformation teams has given rise to seven transformation reports. These reports were adopted by the Cabinet and have been incorporated into the following chapters of the GSDS as part of the further development process.

The following chapters on the areas of transformation address both the current challenges and the measures taken. Figure 3 below (p. 31) identifies some of the key measures. The figure also shows the indicators falling within the respective area of transformation whose targets would be missed in the light of previous developments (known as off-track indicators). The indicators of the GSDS aligned with the SDGs (cf. [chapter C.I.](#)) are the basis for monitoring with a view to measuring progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The regular (off-track) indicator reports form the basis for a targeted follow-up to achieve the sub-objectives that have been set.

Figure 2: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 1



I. Human well-being and capabilities, social justice

The area of transformation “Human well-being and capabilities, social justice” deals, in particular, with the social dimension of sustainability. Transformation team 1 (TT1) prepared a transformation report to this end, which was adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 10 August 2023 (Bundestag printed paper no. 20/8050).

Sustainable development focuses on the well-being of all people both today and in the future. With this in mind, the fundamental rights of each and every person and the fulfilment of their basic needs must be ensured. Furthermore, they must be protected from existential threats, their prosperity must be promoted and they must be enabled to act sustainably. This task needs to be addressed in a wide range of policy areas. An integrated and systemic perspective on sustainability is therefore required. In this context, our actions are guided by the “leave no one behind” principle enshrined in the 2030 Agenda – the principle of enabling active, self-determined participation in society for everyone.

Human well-being is essentially linked to personal health, which supports a self-determined life and participation in education, economic and social life (SDG 3: healthy lives and well-being). An intact environment is essential for well-being and health in this regard. Sports activities make an important contribution to this. Health is therefore one of the keys to the sustainable development of society and the economy.

Education is the basis for a self-determined and responsible life with a view to strengthening human capabilities (SDG 4: quality education). It is a major factor in the prosperity and participation of each and every individual and promotes social cohesion and progress. Education for sustainable development (ESD) in all areas of education (SDG 4.7) is the central driver for the implementation of the SDGs as a whole and for the development of a culture of sustainability. Universities have a key role to play in this process through the training of teachers as multipliers of ESD.

In order to promote social justice, the German Government is pursuing the goal of limiting social inequality in the best possible way by creating an environment that promotes active participation in the transformation to sustainability. To this end, sociocultural aspects of sustainability are to

be taken more strongly into account and social cohesion strengthened (SDG 10: reduce inequality). This requires, among other things, addressing different social groups in a

manner that is tailored to their needs, as well as empowering them to play an active role in shaping the transformation to sustainability in the best possible way.

Figure 3: Areas of transformation, off-track indicators (as of 2024) and measures⁴



⁴ The off-track objectives/indicators presented here are based on the set of indicators at the time of publication of the 2022 indicator report (with any numbers and names that differ from the new set of indicators for the 2025 GSDS, cf. table 2). The off-track assessment is based on data as of September 2024.

Kick-off conference on the dialogue concerning the German Sustainable Development Strategy on 19 October 2023:

“Social engagement is not an end in itself. This is about people not feeling powerless but about them having the opportunity to shape developments. School and education are a key part of this. We need to focus on enabling people to develop their own vision of how they want to live, but also of how we want to live as a society at the end of the day.”

Sarah Ryglewski, Minister of State

Social justice requires that educational and earnings potential are not dependent on social background, that equivalent living conditions are established in Germany, that unequal treatment due to discrimination is reduced and that fair working conditions and opportunities for equal participation are ensured (cf. also [chapter A.III.2.](#) on social justice). Employee participation plays an important role in this context. Collective agreements ensure working conditions on a permanent and co-determined basis, thus strengthening sustainable development. Collective agreements in Germany are currently regressing, however. In order to better address the importance of progress in this area for sustainable development, a new indicator ‘Employment covered by a collective agreement’ (no. 8.5.c) is being introduced as part of the GSDS (cf. also [chapter C.I.2.a.](#)).

The improvement of working conditions and access to decent employment around the world promotes sustainable economic development (SDG 8: decent work).

Companies also bear responsibility for sustainability and social justice along supply and value chains. The implementation of human rights and environmental due diligence by companies has a direct impact on the achievement of a number of SDGs.

The focus of this area of transformation is on SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17. However, due to the numerous interrelationships and links between the SDGs, this area cannot and should not be considered in isolation from the other SDGs. Dealing with conflicting objectives is and remains an ongoing task.

1. Aims

The main goal in this area of transformation is to achieve further progress with regard to the social dimension of sustainability as a cross-cutting issue of the GSDS. This is being achieved on the basis of a common vision by, among other things, further strengthening interministerial cooperation,

systematically observing and dealing with the interrelationships between different policy areas and sectors at federal, *Land* (federal state) and municipal level, and strengthening public participation.

a) Challenges

Challenges in area of transformation 1 exist in particular with regard to inequalities and multiple crisis situations. Demographic change poses challenges in addition to this.

Inequality can prevent individuals from realising their potential with dignity and thus stand in the way of sustainable development. Inequality has increased worldwide in recent years. In Germany, wealth is more unequally distributed than income. Gender-specific and regional imbalances also persist. Social mobility plays an important role in the assessment of inequality. A society can be considered to be more equitable in terms of performance and opportunity if a person’s position is less dependent on pre-existing circumstances and background (Sixth Report on Poverty and Wealth of the German Government, 2021, p. XVI).

Social inequality also exists in healthcare, access to nature and education, for example in terms of lower average life expectancies of people with a lower socioeconomic status. The reduction of social inequality in school careers remains a major challenge (Education Report Authoring Group 2024). Health-related opportunities and risks also continue to be unequally distributed across social lines. This applies, among other things, to health risks associated with environmental pollution (such as air pollution, noise and heat islands) and to opportunities for physical and mental health that result from access to environmental resources (e.g. urban green and natural recreational spaces). In particular, a holistic view of the social and economic conditions under which young people grow up is necessary in order to identify risk factors for young people’s mental health and to have a positive influence in this regard by means of preventive approaches.

In addition, in times of multiple and interrelated crises, their social impacts must be taken into account. The increasing proportion of older people in the population must also be taken into account due to the far-reaching impact that this has on the financing of social security systems (Sixth Report on the Sustainability of Public Finances). Disproportionate burdens on individual population groups should be avoided. In all measures, it is important to assess whether crisis-related losses of prosperity place a greater burden on lower-income households. After all, these households, as well as other socially disadvantaged groups, have reduced adaptive capacities, which are the basis for coping with transformation processes.

As a socially disadvantaged group, people with disabilities are also disproportionately affected by climate change. For example, depending on their disability, they suffer in particu-

lar from heat waves, water shortages and other health risks, as well as conditions that are exacerbated by climate change, such as allergic asthma due to heightened pollen levels.

In order to address the challenges in this area of transformation, it is important to take a holistic approach to the different walks of life of all people in our society. This approach aims to enable everyone to participate equally in the life of society. It strengthens people's self-determination and personal responsibility by helping them to actively shape their living conditions.

It is necessary to address different levels in order to implement this successfully.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“In order to tackle the challenges of the transformation at the individual level, it is important [...] to motivate and empower people. This involves, among other things, promoting lifelong motivation to learn, strengthening individual health literacy [...] and stepping up efforts to impart key skills required for the future. Opportunities for participating in political decision-making processes and the provision of health education and education for sustainable development throughout the entire educational trajectory of all people, as well as the targeted promotion of social innovation, will be a crucial part of this.”

German Council of Nursing

Cultural stakeholders play a particularly important role in this context because they reflect social developments, develop narratives, open up new perspectives and are able to promote cohesion.

b) Focus topics

Within the broad range of topics in the area of transformation, the following four key topics are emphasised in particular:

A networked approach to health

Health is a prerequisite both for individual freedom and for social participation. Being healthy makes it easier to participate in social life. The health of individuals and the population must be protected and promoted. At the same time, health risks must be reduced by creating healthy living and environmental conditions for all people.

The German healthcare system guarantees all members of the public needs-based, comprehensive and easily accessible medical care of a high standard. The German Government's

objective is to improve the quality of medical care for patients while avoiding cuts to the services provided to citizens by the system.

The COVID-19 pandemic in particular showed that interdisciplinary and interministerial approaches to policymaking are becoming increasingly important with a view to maintaining high standards of healthcare and to strengthening the quality of life and general well-being of people in Germany into old age. In view of demographic change, health promotion and prevention in particular should not only be taken into consideration and organised efficiently across all areas of the health system, but also to a greater extent in social, economic, labour market, family, transport and environmental and climate policy, as well as in urban development. The Health in All Policies approach (cf. [chapter B.I.3.a](#)) to interministerial cooperation in health policy is particularly effective in this regard. Interprofessional research approaches are required in order to provide a sound scientific basis for health promotion and prevention relating to sustainability. Care professionals can also play an important role in implementing sustainable processes, for example in relation to climate-induced health problems.

Strengthening public health is of particular importance in view of existing and future health policy challenges in Germany. Building on existing tasks and structures within the remit of the Federal Ministry of Health, a triad of health promotion, prevention and care has therefore been expanded, deepened and broadened in terms of content. The first step to this end was to initiate a process to further develop, modernise and consolidate the content, methods and structures of the Federal Centre for Health Education and parts of the Robert Koch Institute in an efficient manner. With a view to combating non-communicable diseases such as cancer and diabetes, as well as cardiovascular and respiratory conditions even more effectively in the future, the Federal Cabinet adopted a bill to strengthen public health with the health policy goal of establishing a new federal institute for public health.

Further examples include strengthening the public health service through the pact for the public health service and the National Prevention Initiative (NPI) launched by the Federal Ministry of Health under the heading “Healthier in the future” (*In Zukunft gesünder*). The aim of the initiative is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing prevention activities in Germany and to harness synergies by means of a dialogue and networking process between experts from science, politics and the field.

Another important aim is to take early preventive action in the field of health in order to minimise the adverse impacts of climate change and harmful environmental influences

on human health, as well as the loss of biodiversity, while at the same time placing a stronger focus on the positive impacts that an intact environment has on human health. Furthermore, this can help to reduce the economic burden of healthcare costs. A networked approach is required to this end. Intact nature, for example in forests, protected areas and cultivated landscapes, promotes human well-being and capabilities – as a place for informal learning (sensitisation to nature, ESD) and as a place for experiencing nature, exercise and (nature) sports, which are considered to be key elements for building resilience and maintaining physical and mental health, especially in times of crisis or more challenging external influences.

The Federal Ministry of Health, together with partners from leading organisations in the healthcare sector, the *Länder* (federal states) and the municipal umbrella organisations, has initiated the climate pact for health (*Klimapakt Gesundheit*). Important stakeholders in the healthcare sector are jointly tackling the challenges of climate change and agreeing to pool existing initiatives and activities and actively address the manifold challenges of climate adaptation and climate action. In order to reduce mortality and the disease burden caused by hot temperatures, the Federal Ministry of Health launched the Heat Protection Plan as part of a concerted effort in the summer of 2023. The aim is to firmly establish heat protection at the federal level in the medium and long term and to establish a structured and coordinated process of heat protection planning based on the French model. The Heat Protection Plan is an integral part of the German Government's heatwave action planning, which takes into account overarching intersectoral environmental and climate-related adaptation measures, for example in the area of health-oriented urban and regional planning at the municipal level. The first heatwave action plans have been implemented in some cities in a practical, interministerial manner since 2020.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“It is important to think about the environment, climate and health as interrelated issues. After all, environmental factors have been shown to have an impact on human health. It is therefore important to inform the population, especially vulnerable risk groups and their families, about health risks and possible prevention options.”

AOK Baden-Württemberg

The German Environmental Specimen Bank and the German Environmental Survey on Health including human biomonitoring have created instruments to investigate the occurrence of pollutants in the population. This provides important

insights into the health impacts of pollutants on the population and forms the basis for regulatory measures in a range of areas.

Furthermore, the National Strategy on Biological Diversity 2030 (NBS 2030) includes an area of action relating to health and biodiversity. In accordance with the strategy, the German Government will work at the national and international level to restore the environment and nature to a state that is conducive to human health by 2030. The aim is to ensure fair participation in the environment and nature and its health-promoting effects for this and future generations.

Basic, further and continuing training

In order to exploit the social and economic innovative potential of the transformation towards sustainability, appropriate key skills, as well as access to education and further education pathways, are required. Programmes concerning sustainability in formal, non-formal and informal education in all phases of life and in basic, further and continuing training should be expanded and skills required for the future developed and promoted through education for sustainable development. These skills enable people to overcome the complex challenges that lie ahead. We are qualifying urgently needed skilled workers and managers with innovative, diversity- and future-oriented basic, further and continuing training.

The legal framework for the targeted and managed immigration of skilled workers from third countries has been further simplified with the Act and the Regulation on the Further Development of Skilled Immigration in order to strengthen the German labour market and Germany as a business location, thereby contributing to sustainable social prosperity and to safeguarding the social security system.

In November 2023, the Qualification Pillar entered into force, including a reduction of the salary threshold for the EU Blue Card for highly qualified workers and an amendment according to which skilled workers are now allowed to take up any qualified employment in non-regulated professions, regardless of their specific qualifications.

In March 2024, the Experience Pillar entered into force, enabling third-country nationals with extensive practical professional experience in non-regulated professions with a sufficiently high salary to immigrate if they have an employment contract without first having to formally recognise their professional qualifications. If the salary threshold is not met, suitable companies may employ people with foreign university or vocational qualifications as part of a recognition partnership if they undertake to initiate the recognition procedure subsequent to entry and, in the context of the employment, to enable them to close any gaps that have been identified.

With the Potential Pillar, a new residence permit for job-seekers (opportunities card) was introduced on 1 June 2024 for skilled workers in addition to a points-based system for people with a university or vocational qualification acquired abroad. Moreover, the German Government is supporting measures to make the recruitment of skilled workers more efficient by, among other things, digitising, accelerating and staggering procedural steps.

Strengthening inclusion for all as well as participation

This sub-area is primarily intended to promote the objective of strengthening social participation and empowering everyone to help shape it.

This requires not only gender equality as a cross-cutting issue (which is to be more strongly incorporated into all affected policy areas in the future, cf. [chapter B.I.3.e](#)) in line with the principle of “leave no one behind”, but also taking each and every individual into account, especially particularly disadvantaged and hard-to-reach population groups. These groups are to be empowered to participate more fully in society, to actively shape the transformation in a self-determined manner and to benefit from its results.

Key priorities from the stand concerning inclusion at the Sustainability Forum

- The importance of inclusion and accessibility in all areas of social and private life was emphasised. This would also benefit older people and families, for example. Accessibility therefore has advantages for all generations and should be perceived as a quality criterion. With this in mind, “accessibility” should also be the standard, for example in the area of housing and mobility.
- There is also a general need for more opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in decision-making. Likewise, the desire was expressed that the German Disability Council also be represented in the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE).
- The need to consider intersectionality was also mentioned, with women with disabilities, for example, being exposed to a higher risk of violence.
- More specific measures and absolute figures were requested as targets in the area of inclusion and accessibility in the GSDS. The GSDS should also be translated into easy read and simple language.

In addition, the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes is intended to strengthen the acceptance of political decisions and trust in political institutions. In this context, it is particularly important to create opportunities for socially disadvantaged and non-participating groups, such as people with disabilities, to participate in planning and decision-making processes. Involving those affected in the design and development of measures and services makes it possible to tailor measures more effectively to specific needs.

In this context, outreach measures are needed in order to reach socially disadvantaged and non-participating target groups in particular in a relatable and low-threshold manner. Furthermore, a user-centred approach to the (further) development of state services is important, in addition to a cross-sectoral and networked approach to addressing target groups in order to promote the participation of all. The use of synergies and maximally uniform external communications on the part of the German Government is helpful to this end. In this context, not only the context and requirements of the transformation should be explained, but also the opportunities and advantages for the population that this entails, whether for this or for future generations. This objective also includes taking the interests of people with disabilities more strongly into account and ensuring digital inclusion with barrier-free access to digital information and technologies for all people. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that structural barriers, such as the higher risk of poverty for people with disabilities, should also be taken into consideration and addressed.

In order to enable the participation of all, appropriate institutional, structural and social conditions – such as access to social security benefits – must be developed alongside active empowerment.

Social mobilisation and participation are particularly important with regard to the five levers of the GSDS, which are intended to support the six areas of transformation. International responsibility and cooperation are also of particular importance, since, in addition to interrelationships within one’s own country, the impacts of one’s own actions in other countries must also be taken into account.

Sustainable supply chains

Sustainability and social justice are also the responsibility of companies. By observing due diligence along the supply chain, standards are promoted not only in Germany but around the world.

In line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights, a “smart mix” of mandatory and voluntary measures is expedient.

Voluntary due diligence is defined in various international frameworks (in particular the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy).

Mandatory measures are the subject of legislative and negotiation processes at national, European and international level. In Germany, the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) has been in force since 1 January 2023. At the EU level, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) entered into force in July 2024, making it necessary to amend the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG; cf. also [section 2.c](#) – [Corporate responsibility for sustainable supply chains](#)). Back in 2016, the German Government formulated its expectation in the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights that all German companies, regardless of their size, voluntarily comply with due diligence requirements set out in international frameworks. The German Government also supports preventive protection measures for victims of forced labour, labour exploitation and human trafficking. As part of the negotiation of EU trade agreements, it advocates the binding nature of the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization, which set universal minimum standards for decent work.

2. Measures taken

a) Measures to strengthen individual resources

In the interests of strengthening individual resources, the German Government aims to use the measures to impart relevant key skills, thereby empowering citizens to help shape sustainability.

Promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles

Wherever people live, learn and work in Germany, they should be supported in using their health-promoting resources and in being aware of and reducing their health risks. With this in mind, health literacy – the ability to search for, find and evaluate health-related information and to apply it to one’s specific situation – is a fundamental prerequisite for a healthy lifestyle and a high quality of life, especially in the digital age. The Alliance for Health Literacy, for example, is a partnership between the Federal Ministry of Health and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Health of the *Länder* and all relevant umbrella organisations in the healthcare system, including self-administration, and is committed to strengthening health literacy in all walks of life, such as day-care centres, schools, companies, leisure and adult education centres, as well as healthcare and senior citizens’ facilities.

Over 100 projects have been launched to date. The Alliance has updated its agenda in the Health Literacy Roadmap 2024 with the aim of further strengthening health literacy in both the population and in organisations in Germany.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“In addition to adequate and good treatment options for the entire population, special attention must be paid to the conditions in which people live. The promotion of health literacy is also directly bound up with the sustainability of other measures. Equal opportunities in the area of healthcare are also a necessity here.”

Association of German Cities

Targeted measures are required to this end. For example, multilingual information services facilitate access to healthcare for people with a migrant background and promote the development of health literacy. The Federal Ministry of Health provides publications and materials on a range of health topics in over 40 languages on the multilingual portal www.migration-gesundheit.bund.de.

In an ageing population, health promotion and prevention play an increasingly important role in general as good health is a prerequisite for independence and active participation in social life, also at an advanced age. In the face of increasing life expectancy, the goal is to spend any extra years of life in the best possible health and with a high quality of life.

The German Government is also pursuing the goal of improving the early detection and care of cardiovascular diseases and their risk factors, thereby strengthening cardiovascular health in the population. Cardiovascular diseases are, after all, the most common cause of death in Germany, accounting for one third of all deaths and generating the highest medical costs in the healthcare system. To this end, the Federal Cabinet passed a bill promoting heart health (the Healthy Heart Act – GHG) in August 2024. With MOVE for HEALTH, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funded a campaign by the German Sports Youth that motivates children and young people to exercise more while at the same time supporting them in looking after their mental health.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth provides 51 million euro annually via the Federal Foundation for Early Childhood Intervention (cf. the [Child Protection \(Cooperation and Information\) Act – KKG](#), in German) to promote low-threshold and voluntary services

for families with young children in difficult circumstances. The Foundation seeks to strengthen parents' relationships with their children as well as their child-raising skills. An important priority here is shaping everyday family life with a view to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

A sustainable lifestyle also affects the general state of ecosystems in Germany. The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection funds educational measures relating to nature-based climate action with activities and projects in early childhood, school and vocational education via the Action Programme for Natural Climate Protection (ANK). Adult and older target groups are also addressed in the context of lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the funding priority "intervention studies for healthy and sustainable living conditions and lifestyles" of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research makes an important contribution to strengthening health-promoting as well as environmentally and socially just living conditions and lifestyles. Funding is provided for intervention studies that address health promotion and environmental sustainability in equal measure.

The complex, interlinked systemic challenges of planetary health (as a concept that aims to systematise the links between human health, political, economic and social systems and the natural systems of the planet) are also addressed in the funding measure Junior Research Groups "Climate, Environment and Health" initiated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. One of the junior research groups, for example, is investigating the promotion of and facilitation of a healthy, climate-friendly and environmentally compatible diet for all. As part of the national action plan "IN FORM – German national initiative to promote healthy diets and physical activity", the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Federal Ministry of Health are working together to promote healthy nutrition and exercise in all phases of life in order to encourage the population to adopt a healthier lifestyle and thus improve health opportunities in the long term.

Further measures to promote healthy and sustainable nutrition are presented in area of transformation 5 ([chapter B.V.2.e](#)).

Imparting knowledge and skills

The Continuing Education Act aims to strengthen the promotion of further training for employees, to avoid unemployment caused by structural change and to retain skilled workers in companies through qualifications or to train new skilled workers. The Act also implements the training guarantee agreed in the coalition agreement.

Quote from the public participation process:

[...] For many, vocational training is still worth less than a university degree, and a great many pupils have the goal of studying at university at an early age. [...] But we don't just need people who can plan things; we especially need people who can execute them – and that goes for all areas. Training must become more normal and more widespread once again and should not be seen as inferior, which unfortunately is often the case. This image must change radically. [...]"

florian2351 – Klimabildung e. V.

Furthermore, the citizen's benefit introduced in 2023 will create additional financial incentives to take up further training geared towards obtaining a vocational qualification, for example by introducing a further training allowance. This facilitates long-term integration into the labour market.

With the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) federal programme "Shaping the changing world of work through social partnership: continuing education and training and promoting gender equality" (ESF Social Partner Initiative), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is working with the Confederation of German Employers' Associations and the German Trade Union Confederation to establish sustainable further training structures in companies and strengthen the equal, living-wage participation of women in the labour market. This will contribute to the SDG 5 and SDG 8 in addition to SDG 4.

The German Government promotes greater equal opportunities and participation in education by providing funding for training under the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG). Students and school pupils who lack financial resources can receive financial support under the Federal Training Assistance Act for their living and training costs.

A vocational training grant is available to enable young people to undergo in-company or external vocational training in a recognised training occupation. Trainees are, as a rule, supported if the necessary funds are not otherwise available to them, they do not live with their parents during their vocational training and the training institution cannot be reached from their parents' home within a reasonable period of time. The costs that may be covered include, for example, necessary travel expenses, childcare costs and other expenses.

In addition, the Career Development Act (AFBG) provides financial support for participants in further training measures offered by public and private institutions that prepare students specifically for over 700 further training qualifica-

tions. Moreover, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has funded 17 innovation clusters since 2020 with the federal competition “InnoVET – Shaping the Future – Innovations for Excellent Vocational Education and Training”. In these clusters, regional and industry-specific stakeholders develop and test innovative basic, further and continuing training programmes that are geared to the needs of companies and create incentives for young people with different opportunities for starting out in life to enter vocational training. The new InnoVET PLUS competition, which was launched at the end of April 2023 as part of the Initiative for Excellence in Vocational Education and Training, addresses the ever-shorter development cycles and associated skills and qualification requirements in the field of digitalisation and the environmental and technological transformation.

People must be taught relevant skills for the future in order to give them the opportunity to participate in the transformation of society. Education for sustainable development plays a key role here. ESD stands for a form of education that enables people to think and act sustainably. In order to implement the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD in a binding manner, the National Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2017 under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The National Action Plan makes specific proposals for how ESD is to be embedded in structural terms at all levels of the German education system. This applies to both formal education (curricula, higher education agreements) and to non-formal and informal learning (sports, museums, club work). Furthermore, ESD is to be integrated in educational institutions in a holistic manner in line with the whole institution approach. With a view to implementing the current UNESCO programme ESD 2030, the National ESD Platform, the highest body in the ESD process, has adopted a discussion paper that identifies seven levers for accelerating the integration of ESD in all areas of education. As part of the National Action Plan on ESD, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is working together with the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany to integrate such skills for the future in curricula in a structural manner. To this end, a curriculum framework for lessons in global development has been created that shows in a practical way how topics of sustainable development can be integrated into all school subjects at the lower secondary level. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany are currently working with civil society and the academic community to expand this framework to include the upper secondary level. The latest recommendation by the Standing Conference on ESD in schools of June 2024 provides an important basis for further development.

Quote from the public participation process:

“It is not enough to simply create add-on educational opportunities; these must also be integrated into the education system. The comprehensive introduction of ESD further training for teachers in educational institutions is a concrete step in this direction that, in line with the “train the trainer” approach, can incorporate ESD into the system already today. [...] This is not just a question of schools or universities, but of all areas of education, which must be linked up with each other in order to facilitate lifelong learning.”

**Comment by Phillip Gutberlet – youpaN,
youth forum of the National ESD Platform**

In higher education, ESD has the important role of providing future leaders and teachers with the knowledge and skills they need in order to act as multipliers in advancing the social transformation. The broad-based integration of ESD in the higher education system is supported, among other things, by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research’s funding guideline “Transformation pathways for sustainable universities”.

ESD is also funded within the framework of more subject-specific programmes such as the Federal Biological Diversity Programme – for example with projects that impart knowledge about species and ecological contexts, thus contributing to the protection of biodiversity.

Skills in mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology (MINT, or STEM in English) are essential for a sustainable future. With the MINT Action Plan 2.0, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is promoting access to STEM at all levels of education, for example in early education with the Stiftung Kinder forschen (Little Scientists Foundation), extracurricular education (the MINT-Cluster, which fosters STEM skills), initiatives to support STEM stakeholders (MINT-ernetzt and MINT-Campus) and STEM research. The Data Literacy Toolbox, on the other hand, provides a learning environment for data literacy in a targeted manner.

In a (knowledge) society of increased life expectancy, learning and education are the key to equal social participation and an asset for individuals and society, also in old age. In order to take greater account of the educational needs and interests of an increasingly ageing society in all its diversity and provide older people with a wide range of options for accessing educational opportunities and digital participation, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, together with partner organisations from the federal level, *Länder*, municipalities, business and science communities and civil society, is funding the nationwide

Digital Pact for Old Age initiative and the *Digitaler Engel Plus* project. It is also lending its support to the project *Künstliche Intelligenz für ein gutes Altern*, which promotes the use of artificial intelligence among the elderly, and to *Bildung und Lernen im Alter*, a service centre for education and learning in later life. The Digital Pact for Old Age supports older people in developing and expanding their digital skills, for example with local low-threshold learning and experience opportunities. The mobile advisory teams of the *Digitaler Engel Plus* project provide older people on the ground throughout Germany with digital skills that are relevant to their everyday lives. The *Künstliche Intelligenz für ein gutes Altern* project strengthens the AI skills of older people in a targeted manner by training multipliers and testing relevant technologies at a number of locations in Germany. *Bildung und Lernen im Alter*, a service centre for education and learning in later life, also supports the desire of many older people to learn, including in the areas of health education, civic education, cultural education and volunteering. The internet portal Wissensdurstig.de is a central information platform and point of contact for multipliers working with senior citizens and in education, as well as for older people, on the subject of education and learning in old age.

With regard to the priority area “inclusion for all”, the Participation Opportunities Act should be mentioned in particular. The Act aims to facilitate social participation through longer-term publicly funded employment (“social labour market”). The medium- to long-term goal is to transition to unsubsidised employment. The social labour market was made permanent with the Citizen’s Benefit Act.

The approximately 500 youth migration services support young people with an immigration background between the ages of 12 and 27 throughout Germany by providing counselling and educational and leisure activities. One focus is on providing long-term, individual support to young people on their educational and professional paths. The aim is to foster young people’s social inclusion and improve their prospects.

More women in senior positions

With the Second Gender Equality (Management Positions) Act (FüPoG II), the German Government has enshrined the goal of equal participation of women and men in leadership positions in the federal civil public service by the end of 2025 in the Federal Act on Gender Equality. The tried and tested fixed quota for supervisory boards pursuant to the Gender Equality (Management Positions) Act is supplemented by a minimum participation requirement for executive boards under the second Act of the same name (FüPoG II). Listed and fully co-determined companies must appoint at least one woman to their executive boards if they consist of more than three people. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs,

Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has established an inter-ministerial process with “Plan FüpO 2025”. A central component of this is the expansion of part-time leadership, as this is still the exception. In June 2024, the Ministry concluded the project “part-time leadership at the supreme federal authorities” (*Führen in Teilzeit in den obersten Bundesbehörden*) with the publication of a recommendation for action. Monitoring of women in leadership positions in the subordinate area of the supreme federal authorities was also expanded. Figures on developments throughout the public service of the Federation, and also in the private sector, the committees within the remit of the Federation, public companies and among social insurance providers are published (in German) at www.bmfsfj.de/frauen-in-fuehrungspositionen.

The Gender Equality (Management Positions) Acts also set binding targets for greater gender equality at the management level of German companies. The fixed gender quota of at least 30% of women on supervisory boards has proven effective. The minimum participation requirement for executive boards with more than three members in large German companies is also an effective tool.

The European Union’s Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive stands for a more balanced representation of women and men in management positions. Women are still underrepresented in the management levels of private companies throughout the EU. Binding standards are intended to ensure that they participate equally in economic life in all member states. The aim of the Directive is to substantially increase the proportion of women in the management levels of listed companies in the EU. The objective is to achieve the target of 40% women in supervisory boards or a total of 33% in supervisory and executive boards. Member states in which effective measures have already been taken may suspend the implementation of these requirements. In Germany, extensive measures already apply as a result of the provisions of the Gender Equality (Management Positions) Acts, with the result that the country has availed itself of the suspension clause.

b) Measures to strengthen institutional resources

A key component of successful transformation processes is the provision of needs-based services for all members of the public that are tailored to their specific circumstances. More than ever, this requires cross-cutting policy measures and thus a new culture of cooperation in public administration. The institutional and structural framework conditions are a prerequisite for enabling all people in our society to live sustainably and should therefore be strengthened.

The German Government has taken the following measures, among others, to support people in different phases and circumstances of life.

The healthcare system, for example, is particularly important here, especially in the digital age. The Federal Ministry of Health, for instance, has developed a comprehensive Digitalisation Strategy for Health and Care together with more than 500 stakeholders, which was published in spring 2023. The strategy takes a holistic, people-centred approach, and people and their needs are consistently placed centre-stage. In particular, the Act to Accelerate the Digitalisation of the Healthcare System (Digital Act) and the Act on the improved Use of Health Data (Health Data Use Act) seek not only to improve everyday care, but also research opportunities in Germany with digital solutions. For example, electronic patient records, which will be introduced for all people with statutory health insurance from 2025, will promote the exchange and use of health data and provide targeted support for the care of citizens; in addition, health data will be made more easily usable for purposes geared towards the common good. This is in line with the European Health Data Space, which will enter into force in 2025. The European Health Data Space promotes the exchange and use of health data across EU borders, leading to more efficient health services and the improved use of resources.

In addition, the German Government's National Pharma Strategy has developed a plan of action to improve the framework conditions for the manufacture and development of medicinal products, to examine incentives for the establishment of manufacturing sites in Germany and to promote innovation projects in the pharmaceutical industry, which contribute to achieving SDG 9 in particular (promoting industrialisation, innovation and infrastructure). This is also in line with the objectives of the Act to Combat and Improve the Supply of Medicines (ALBVVG), which entered into force on 27 July 2023 and is intended to help avoid shortages of medicinal products and to create framework conditions that will make Germany more attractive as a market for medicinal products once again. The aim here is to safeguard the supply of medicinal products to members of the public in the long term.

In order to ensure that high-quality, comprehensive and needs-based hospital care can continue to be provided in Germany in the future, the hospital reform aims to divide hospital treatment services into service groups, for each of which quality criteria will be defined. In addition to improving the quality of treatment, a key part of the reform is the introduction of basic funding for maintaining essential services and infrastructure – this is intended to ensure that the provision of necessary hospitals is largely independent of the provision of services to a relevant extent in the future. Moreover, cross-sectoral and integrated healthcare is to be strengthened. The concerns of rural and deprived areas are given special consideration in the context of the reform.

The reform pursues the following key objectives: ensuring and improving the quality of treatment, guaranteeing comprehensive medical care for patients, increasing efficiency in hospital care and cutting red tape.

In addition, with the Hospital Transparency Act, the German Government has laid the groundwork for all members of the public, irrespective of their income and education, to be better informed about inpatient care. Since May 2024, data on the range of services and quality aspects of inpatient care in Germany has been published by the Federal Ministry of Health in a transparency directory, the Federal Clinic Atlas, in a way that is easy to understand and accessible to all. The Federal Clinic Atlas is updated on an ongoing basis.

Last but not least, the Federal Ministry of Health has developed an action plan for a diverse, inclusive and accessible healthcare system in a participatory process with stakeholder organisations. This is intended to make a significant contribution to reducing barriers to care for people in all their diversity. The action plan was published on 2 December 2024.

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection supports social institutions in adapting to the impacts of climate change with the Climate Adaptation in Social Institutions (AnpaSo) programme.

The German Government continues to pursue the goal of eradicating homelessness in Germany by 2030. As a first step, it is presenting a National Action Plan to Tackle Homelessness that identifies key measures in the various legal and policy areas that will be addressed jointly with the *Länder* and local authorities at the respective level. One key measure to counteract homelessness is increasing the supply of affordable housing (cf. section “Promoting sustainable and affordable housing construction” in [chapter B.IV.2.b](#)).

Institutional support for children and young people

With a view to strengthening early-years education, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has launched five investment programmes since 2008, with a total volume of 5.4 billion euro, to finance childcare, leading to the creation of more than 750,000 additional places for children up to school age.

The Federation provided the *Länder* with a total of around four billion euro in 2023 and 2024 through an amendment to the distribution of VAT revenue under the Daycare Quality Act (KiQuTG) so that they can implement measures to further develop the quality of childcare and to relieve the burden with respect to parental contributions. The further developed Daycare Quality Act is intended to provide the *Länder* with

a further four billion euro in additional VAT funds in 2025 and 2026 to support their efforts to improve quality. This is also intended to contribute to equal living conditions and more equal opportunities.

With the *Startchancen* programme, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is helping to break the correlation between social background and educational success at around 4000 schools with a high proportion of socially disadvantaged students as early as from the 2024/25 school year. To this end, investments are being made in climate-friendly, accessible schools with a modern learning environment. The programme's opportunity budget for needs-based school and teaching development measures, as well as more staff for multi-professional teams, will also enable innovations in education to be applied directly. This ten-year programme aims to create more equal opportunities and to strengthen the performance of the education system as a whole. It provides impetus for sustainable school and teaching development at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. A particular focus here is on strengthening basic skills, i.e. core skills in German and mathematics, and also in the socio-emotional area, as well as on empowering young people to participate in democracy.

The digital platform *Schultransform* funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research supports schools through self-checks, potential analysis and recommendations for action in their individual school development process towards a culture of digitality. In the second funding phase (2023 to 2026), the project will focus on education for sustainable development and equal opportunities with *SchultransformNEXT*.

Institutional support for people of working age

Basic cover for jobseekers was fundamentally overhauled with the introduction of citizen's benefit. Citizen's benefit ensures the livelihoods of people of working age and their families if they cannot provide for themselves alone. In addition, citizen's benefit aims to help people of working age to find qualified employment on a permanent basis so that they can support themselves again. Among other things, this contributes to SDGs 1, 8 and 10.

Since participation in working life in our working society makes a significant contribution to social participation, the Act to Promote an Inclusive Labour Market, for example, includes numerous legal amendments seeking to get more people with disabilities into regular employment, keep more people with health impairments in work and provide more targeted support for people with severe disabilities.

The impacts of climate change are already endangering the health of employees and value added in Germany. Together with experts from various disciplines, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is analysing and evaluating the impacts of climate change on the labour system in its policy workshop "Klima wandelt Arbeit" (climate changes work) with the aim of creating new framework conditions promoting a humane and climate-friendly working environment.

Opinion from the Science Platform Sustainability 2030:

"That is why key skills are important, enabling people to deal with new challenges, changing life situations and accelerated change."

Prof. Gerhard de Haan

Institutional support for older people

Of the approximately 40 million active employees, around 36 million have a mandatory pension insurance scheme. The statutory pension fund is the most important form of retirement provision for almost 33 million employees. For several years now, funds from the federal budget have covered around 30% of the expenditure of the statutory pension fund.

The aim of the basic pension is to ensure that those who have paid into the pension insurance scheme for decades are better off in old age. The basic pension supplement can be received by those who have worked for at least 33 years and earned below average, raised children or cared for relatives. Around 1.3 million pensioners benefit from the basic pension and receive an average of 92 euro (gross) more per month. This contributes, among other things, to achieving SDG 10.

c) Measures to strengthen social resources

In addition to strengthening the individual and institutional levels, it is necessary to involve and strengthen social resources for the transformation towards sustainability. Measures aim to promote the participation of society as a whole in the transformation towards sustainability and to counteract the fragmentation of society. The following measures, among others, have been initiated or established to this end.

Strengthening social cohesion

In order to strengthen social cohesion, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has supported the development of the Research Institute for Social Cohesion, a decentralised,

multidisciplinary humanities and social science institute with 11 locations, since 2020. The institute pools expertise and potential for research into social cohesion and strengthens cooperation and exchange between research and practice.

Moreover, with the ESF Plus programme *Bildungskommunen* (“educational communities”), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research promotes participation in analogue and digitally interconnected municipal educational landscapes for lifelong learning, thus strengthening, among other things, education for sustainable development at the local level.

With its *Förderprogramm Entwicklungspolitische Bildung* (“development policy education funding programme”), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports civil society organisations that implement educational measures on global sustainability issues, strengthen skills for sustainable engagement and bring various societal groups into contact with each other.

With the federal programme *Mehrgenerationenhaus. Miteinander – füreinander* (“Multigenerational centre. With each other – for each other”), the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports around 530 multigenerational centres throughout Germany as meeting places for people of all ages and backgrounds. With the help of almost 30,000 volunteers, the multigenerational centres strengthen social interaction and cohesion between generations, thereby contributing to the creation of opportunities for good development and fair participation and thus to equal living conditions.

In the area of communal and intergenerational living, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports projects promoting self-administration and participation, for example in building groups and cooperatives. Examples include the AGIL pilot project for age-appropriate, communal and inclusive living (*AGIL – Altersgerecht, gemeinschaftlich und inklusiv leben, 2024–2027*) and the advice and information platform *Wissen, Informationen, Netzwerke – WIN für Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen*.

In order to strengthen civil society engagement, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports the project work of people who are committed on a daily basis to fostering democratic togetherness with the federal Live Democracy! programme. Since 2015, the programme has supported projects at all levels of government throughout Germany that strengthen social cohesion, promote democracy and diversity, and counter all anti-democratic tendencies. These include discriminatory attacks, hate speech online and all forms of extremism. In line with the coalition agreement, the German Government is strengthening tried and tested approaches in funding and cooperat-

ing with civil society organisations from 2025 and developing these further with current societal challenges in mind. This is intended to continue to promote our democracy, shape diversity and prevent extremism.

In December 2022, the Federal Cabinet approved the bill for a Democracy Promotion Act. The bill aims to strengthen democratic civil society. To this end, the German Government is to be given a legal mandate for the first time to, in particular, support civil society projects that promote democracy, shape diversity, prevent extremism and provide civic education, but also to take appropriate measures itself.

The bill of the Democracy Promotion Act, which is currently going through parliament, is intended to enshrine uniform funding requirements in the areas of democracy promotion, shaping diversity, extremism prevention and civic education in legislation and to create the conditions for implementing corresponding funding measures that are independent of age, longer-term and more needs-oriented than has previously been the case.

As part of the federal programme entitled *Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt – Vor Ort. Vernetzt. Verbunden* (“Social cohesion – Local. Integrated. Interconnected”, BGZ) the German Government funds projects that create spaces for civil society activities and for the development of intercultural friendships and communities. This programme aims to strengthen and consolidate the social cohesion of all people living in Germany, regardless of their social, ethnic or religious background or sexual orientation. The target group of these projects are adult and young (newly arrived) immigrants as well as adults and young people with German citizenship from the age of 12. Approximately 80 new projects are included in the funding programme each year. The focuses can vary from year to year and include, for example: “Leading by example – raising awareness of successful integration work”, “Ways out of isolation – promoting encounters and participation” and “For diversity and tolerance – against discrimination, racism and antisemitism”.

Strengthening the participation of older people

In order to strengthen the participation of older people, the German Government is promoting voluntary work, self-organisation and association work by and for older people, also across generations. In order to prevent and alleviate loneliness in the transition from working life to the post-professional phase, the funding programme *Stärkung der Teilhabe älterer Menschen – gegen Einsamkeit und soziale Isolation*, which seeks to strengthen the participation of older people and tackle loneliness and social isolation, promotes socially innovative measures with the help of the ESF Plus programme for people aged 60 and over.

Strengthening young people's participation and involvement opportunities

Greater opportunities for young people to participate are a key priority of the German Government's policy. The age for participating in the elections to the European Parliament held on 11 November 2022 was therefore reduced to 16.

The Child and Youth Plan of the Federation is the key funding instrument of child and youth welfare at the federal level and is based on section 83 (1) of Book VIII of the Social Code. The support that this provides helps to safeguard, strengthen and further develop child and youth welfare and advances the objectives of giving all young people equal opportunities, reducing disadvantages and addressing risks in a preventive manner.

Since 2022, the German Government's Youth Strategy has been further developed with a National Action Plan (NAP) for Child and Youth Participation. The objective of the NAP is to strengthen the involvement of young people in Germany. Recommendations for effective child and youth participation are being developed in formats up until 2025 as part of a temporary dialogue process. These formats involve young people as well as representatives from civil society, the European Union, the Federation, *Länder* and municipalities.

Over the last few years, youth participation formats have been established at many federal ministries to enable young people to participate in consultative political processes, e.g. on climate and environmental policy (Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture). The federal competence centre for children and youth participation (*Bundeskompetenzzentrum Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung*), a project funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, advises the German Government on the implementation of youth participation formats.

Involving young people in all ministries:

"It is essential for the German Government to involve young people in national and international processes for shaping the sustainability transformation at all ministries."

Decision of the Federal Cabinet of 13 July 2023, Transformation report on international responsibility and cooperation, p. 7

With the programme Culture is Strength. Education Alliances, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research funds projects in extracurricular cultural education that are aimed at children and young people who are at risk of educational disadvantage and are thus restricted in their educational opportunities. The projects are implemented by local educational alliances. To date, around 1.4 million children and young people have been supported in more than 49,000 projects.

Youth participation is part of education for sustainable development. As part of the ESD process, 30 young people are participating in the ESD youth forum youpaN to implement the National Action Plan on ESD.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's school competition on development policy "all for one world for all" (*alle für eine Welt für alle*) is aimed in particular at young people. It is intended to help them to engage with issues of sustainable development and to raise awareness of options for action and opportunities for getting involved.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports projects by and for children and young people with the federal Future Package for Sport, Culture and Health (*Zukunftspaket für Bewegung, Kultur und Gesundheit*). The focus here is on the participation of young people. In 2023 and 2024, around 470,000 children and young people took part in over 2800 projects and activities planned and designed by over 54,000 young people.

Corporate responsibility for sustainable supply chains

The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) establishes legally binding provisions regarding businesses' responsibility for upholding human rights in their supply chains for the first time. The Act requires businesses to exercise adequate due diligence in respect of human rights and certain environmental considerations in their supply chains. Risks covered by the law arise if there is a risk of a violation of one of the prohibitions listed by the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) – including, for example, the prohibition of child labour, slavery and forced labour and the prohibition of withholding an adequate wage. Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of the European Parliament and of the Council on corporate sustainability due diligence, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), entered into force on 25 July 2024. The member states have two years to transpose the directive into their national legislation. Care must be taken to ensure that the administrative costs associated with due diligence and reporting obligations are kept within limits. In the interests of the economy, particularly the SME sector, it

is important that due diligence obligations be implemented pragmatically and that disproportionate burdens on businesses be avoided.

The German Government therefore adopted a cabinet decision on 17 July 2024 in favour of transposing the CSDDD by amending the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act one to one, generating as little red tape as possible. This will reduce its scope to fewer than 1000 businesses – only around one in three of those to which the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act currently applies. All obligations under the CSDDD, including the provisions on civil liability, will become binding only at the latest date prescribed by European law.

With regard to global supply chains, the German Government is also playing a constructive role in discussions concerning the development of an international instrument at UN level to improve the protection of human rights and establish a level playing field with regard to corporate due diligence obligations. In so doing, it is emphasising its commitment to the social and environmental dimension of sustainability at the international level.

The concrete fulfilment and implementation of human rights and environmental due diligence by companies are supported by various measures by the German Government.

The Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control has been working since 2022 to create the substantive, organisational and technical conditions to fulfil the legal mandate to control and enforce the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act. To this end, it has, among other things, developed effective, unbureaucratic and resource-saving solutions and published guidelines to help companies comply with the statutory due diligence requirements. To bolster businesses, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action launched an immediate action programme for sub-legislative measures for the practical implementation of the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act also in light of the CSDDD's requirements. The Directive contains a number of provisions geared towards the practical and business-friendly implementation of due diligence obligations. The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act in its current form offers scope for already putting some of these evaluation criteria into practice at a sub-legislative level, as immediate measures, in the procedures of the responsible inspection authority, namely the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control. These steps directly and tangibly ease the burden on businesses.

Implementation is also supported by funding information and advisory services as well as organising and supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships. The latter include, for example, the sectoral dialogues of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The aim of these dialogues is to

offer guidance to companies in sectors facing particular human rights challenges and to offer them adequate support in implementing human rights and environmental due diligence. They thereby contribute to improving the human rights situation across global supply and value chains. The first sectoral dialogues are taking place with the automotive and energy industries.

3. Next steps

In order to bring the social dimension of sustainability even more strongly to bear in all areas of transformation, it is necessary to achieve a “culture of sustainability”.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“This includes, in particular, questions such as where new, different or growing inequalities threaten to arise in the course of the transformation. How should these inequalities be tackled? And which groups of people are affected and how?”

Catholic Family Association

A key instrument in this context is target group-specific communication about sustainability. To this end, information must be communicated in an attractive and easily comprehensible way in order to reach as many people as possible and to enable them to become involved. A broad-based and vibrant discourse about sustainability, which involves as many people as possible, is required. An important measure in this context is the Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform (cf. [chapter C.II.2.](#); for more about communication, cf. [chapter C.II.3.](#)).

Future developments and potential crises must be better anticipated so that they can be addressed in a timely manner and managed adequately. The ministries need to increase the use of strategic foresight methods to this end. Here, recourse can be taken to an existing interministerial strategic foresight group under the direction of the Federal Chancellery, to existing working units in the ministries, and to the services offered by the Federal Academy for Security Policy. A key task of strategic foresight is to identify topics and issues that are or could become of great importance for political opinion-making in the future. This creates opportunities for the timely and structural discussion of future developments and can increase the capacity for prevention and resilience.

It is crucial here that visions for the future are developed and evaluated not only at the level of experts. Instead, it is important to enter into dialogue with members of the public and various social groups, be it in the form of citizens' dialogues,

expert workshops, conferences or digital discussion formats. The aim is to integrate the perspectives of members of the public into government action in the area of the social dimension of sustainability to an even greater extent than previously and to shape policy together with people on the ground. One example of public participation by the German Bundestag is the Citizens' Assembly entitled "Nutrition in transition: between a private matter and governmental responsibilities".

However, it is also important to improve the German Government's ability to respond to crises in order to reach citizens in a needs-based manner. Both the challenges of the 2022 energy crisis and the 2021 COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for a flexible, legally secure and unbureaucratic way to disburse payments to private households. Burdens are to be expected also in the future – for example, in particular crisis situations and as a result of increases in the carbon price. Such extraordinary burdens can affect some population groups more than others. In order to provide faster and, where applicable, more targeted support in the future, the German Government is continuing its work to establish a mechanism for direct payments to private individuals that can also be used to disburse a climate allowance. The reduction of inefficient subsidies that are harmful to environment must also be promoted in the interests of the social and environmental dimension of sustainability and as part of a commitment to a socially just transformation.

In order to strengthen the social dimension, it is vital that state support addresses not only technical and economic barriers, but also the social preconditions for success and provides targeted initiatives to promote the necessary individual, institutional and social resources. To this end, the various social actors, from science and industry to civil society multipliers and administration and policymakers at the federal, *Land* and municipal level, must be brought together to solve key sustainability challenges. The cultural sector can also contribute to a reflected, self-determined and engaged way of life. This requires the coherent and systemic integration of various funding instruments, in particular the removal of barriers to access.

a) Intensifying interministerial cooperation

In order to establish which structural and institutional framework conditions must be in place so that all people in society can lead a sustainable life with a high level of well-being, an important building block is what is known as the whole-of-government approach, i.e. holistic and interministerial action. With this in mind, measures with co-benefits for health, education, culture and social justice, social cohesion and a healthy environment are needed in order to achieve all of the SDGs.

Interministerial cooperation in health policy

Biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution have a major impact on human health. They increase, for example, the risk of developing infectious diseases with pandemic potential. The German Government is taking on this important political task with the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to holistic and interministerial action. The WHO's Health in All Policies Framework for Country Action is an approach to political governance that aims to maintain and improve the health and well-being of the population in terms of an overarching health promotion policy by taking into account the health effects of political measures in all sectors from their inception onwards. It is also important to create synergies between sectors and to avoid harmful impacts on public health. The German Government aims to strengthen this approach in the work of all of the ministries. An interministerial Health in All Policies working group under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Health is to develop proposals to this end.

The lessons learned from past infectious diseases of zoonotic origin, such as Ebola, influenza, COVID-19, etc., must also be taken more into account at the global level in order to avoid future pandemics. It is crucial to recognise that humans are biologically part of the animal kingdom and share the environment with it. The One Health approach acknowledges these interrelations and pursues a cross-sectoral, integrative understanding and management of health risks. The human-animal-environment interface is vital to understanding the causes of health risks and the health effects of climate change and the destruction of nature. One Health means working together across disciplines, making better use of knowledge available in different areas and taking joint preventive action. Accordingly, research and measures in line with the One Health approach must be strengthened, pooled, coordinated and further developed in an interministerial manner and across borders. The interministerial informal One Health network has been tasked with examining which measures are suitable for significantly advancing the implementation of the One Health approach.

The German Government is committed to the successful conclusion of the negotiations for the International Pandemic Accord and the revision of the International Health Regulations at the WHO, which was successfully completed in June 2024. It will also support permanently funded pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, building on existing structures including the Pandemic Fund.

Interministerial cooperation in other areas

An example of holistic and interministerial action, alongside the HiAP, is the federal accessibility initiative, which initiates interministerial measures to promote accessibility in both

the public and private sectors in Germany. The overarching legislation on accessibility, as well as mobility, current and future housing and construction, health and digital affairs, form the focus of the initiative. This makes it a prime example of a cross-thematic and networked approach to target groups that serves to promote the participation of all. A further example is the German Collaborative Network for Equity in Health, in which 75 cooperation partners from various ministries collaborate to reduce health inequality.

Quote from the online participation process:

“Accessibility is a key to social participation and benefits all members of a society.”

bezev

Environmental protection and climate action and adaptation measures must also be designed to be more socially equitable than in the past. Limiting global heating prevents social inequalities from being exacerbated as climate change causes the greatest suffering to people with little money. Nevertheless, with SDG 10 (less inequality) in mind, the climate action measures chosen must not themselves lead to a further intensification of inequalities. The links between quality of and access to the environment, social factors and health impacts, including in cities (cf. [chapter B.IV.](#)) and in the workplace, must be taken into account. Furthermore, measures taken in accordance with the polluter-pays principle (cf. also [chapter B.II.1.a](#)) must most strongly address those who contribute most to global heating.

b) Strengthening social innovation promoting sustainability

Social innovation also plays an important role in the transformation towards sustainability and can be used for the proactive and innovation-driven design of change processes towards sustainable development (cf. e.g. [chapter B.IV.2.a](#) about experiments in planning, building and forms of participation).

The German National Strategy for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises defines seven guidelines for promoting social innovation across all federal ministries. These include “Act sustainably”, “Recognise the impact” and “Think innovation holistically”.

The concept of social innovation

“Social innovations primarily embrace new social approaches and organisational models which contribute to viable and sustainable solutions for the challenges facing our society.”

German National Strategy for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises, Federal Cabinet decision of 13 September 2023, p. 4

c) Strengthening sustainable basic, further and continuing training and adult education

Further efforts are also required in the field of basic and further training in order to enable everyone in our society to lead a good life.

With *Lebenschancen-BAföG* (Life Chances BAföG), a new funding instrument is being assessed that supports self-determined continuing education. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research is currently working on possible implementations with the support of the European Commission and the OECD. The National Platform on Education for Sustainable Development (NP ESD), chaired by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, will also address continuing and further training and adult education as a new priority. In this context, the question as to how ESD content is taught in vocational basic, further and continuing training, as well as in general further education, and how skills for the future are taught to employees, particularly in the federal administration, to managers and decision-makers, and to teachers and pre-school teachers, but also through informal educational opportunities, for example for older people, and the question as to how to implement the whole institution approach in public institutions should be discussed. This focus has also been adopted by the future and key skills working group of the National Skills Strategy. Extracurricular places of learning and informal learning are accorded an important role in this context (including (sports) clubs, adult education centres and museums).

Within the framework of the funding guideline “Transformation pathways for sustainable universities”, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is funding research and best-practice projects to enable universities to further develop ESD and sustainability in line with the whole institution approach and to act as role models for the future of society.

Under the umbrella of the Initiative for Excellence in Vocational Training, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is strengthening the entire vocational training system with targeted measures ranging from legislation and funding programmes to improvements in individual support. The Initiative for Excellence thus ensures the necessary increase in attractiveness and modernity in vocational education and training. The aim is to increase appreciation in society for vocational training and to make dual vocational training more attractive for all young people.

Moreover, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's ESF Plus programme "Sustainability at work – future-oriented training" (NIB) strengthens vocational training for sustainable development. The funding priorities include training relating to sustainability for trainers, optimising framework conditions for vocational training for sustainable development (VETSD), and innovative approaches from the perspective of operational change.

d) Promoting inclusion for all

It will be important also in the future to design measures in a more targeted and needs-oriented way in order to actively involve the affected target groups in their design and implementation.

Last but not least, it is also important in the future to make greater use of international forums as well as forms of cooperation and peer learning.

e) Further objectives and planned measures

The issue of gender equality in the social-ecological transformation is to be strengthened by taking gender equality into account across all relevant policy areas, supported, among other things, by the Fourth Gender Equality Report of the German Government, which will be published in 2025. The opinion on the Fourth Gender Equality Report is intended to provide recommendations for action for a gender-oriented design of transformation processes and thus contribute to greater gender equality and a sustainable policy. The recommendations of the report and other important parameters such as the regulatory impact assessment for gender equality should be taken into consideration together in order to achieve a common leverage effect for gender-equitable sustainable development.

The consideration of human rights due diligence in public procurement is to be further strengthened. The Federation's large procurement volume makes the consideration of human rights due diligence obligations an effective lever for the implementation of due diligence obligations by potential suppliers. The Federation procures particularly large volumes of textiles (e.g. uniforms) as well as information and communications technology (ICT). In addition, there is

a declaration of commitment between the Procurement Office of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the industry association Bitkom e. V. relating to compliance with labour and social standards in public ICT procurement.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is also committed to upgrading and expanding good services. With this in mind, we have, for example, initiated the removal of the time limit on subcontractor liability for social security contributions in the courier, express and parcel delivery industry.

The National Action Plan – New Opportunities for Children in Germany aims to provide disadvantaged children and young people with better access to care, education, health-care, nutrition and housing by 2030. In so doing, Germany is implementing the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee, which aims to break the cycle of disadvantage and prevent children growing up in poverty from becoming adults at risk of poverty. The National Action Plan was adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 5 July 2023 and comprises approximately 350 measures spearheaded by the Federation, *Land* and municipalities, as well as civil society organisations. The NAP Committee, established in September 2023, is the first body in Germany to facilitate a regular and coordinated exchange at the federal level on the poverty and social exclusion of children and young people between stakeholders from all political levels and areas of responsibility, as well as civil society organisations and academic experts. The Committee is chaired by Ekin Deligöz, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, who was appointed National Child Opportunities Coordinator. The first progress report on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee was prepared at the end of 2024 and will be sent to the European Commission in early 2025.

Quote from the dialogue process:

"Growing up in poverty leads to reduced opportunities for development, in addition to social exclusion and deprivation."

Working group – Child and Youth Welfare Association

The All-Day Support for Children of Primary-School Age Act (GaFöG) will gradually introduce a legal entitlement to all-day care for children of primary school age from 1 August 2026. After the completion of the investment programme for the accelerated expansion of infrastructure for all-day care (2020–2022), an investment programme for the expansion of all-day care was launched in 2023. With both programmes, the Federation is providing a total of 3.5 billion euro in financial

assistance for investments in quantitative and qualitative expansion for the *Länder* until the end of 2027 in accordance with the All-Day Education and Care Funding Act (GaFG) and the All-Day Childcare Financial Assistance Act (GaFinHG) via the special fund for the development of all-day education and care for children of primary school age set up in 2020. With these funds, school providers (including independent organisations) and child and youth welfare organisations can convert, expand, renovate (in terms of energy efficiency) or rebuild and then equip their premises. It is conceivable, for example, that kitchens and canteens will be built and equipped in primary schools, and that after-school care premises, schoolyards, recreation rooms and sports halls will be modified in terms of their structure and equipped with furniture and play and sports equipment. In addition, the All-Day Support for Children of Primary-School Age Act stipulates that the vertical distribution of VAT revenue be amended to benefit the *Länder* in order to offset the additional operating costs incurred by the expansion of all-day care. From 2026, these funds will be distributed in stages, rising by a total of 2.49 billion euro between 2026 and 2029, and then by 1.3 billion euro annually from 2030.

The implementation of a comprehensive programme of all-day care for children of primary school age will help to improve the compatibility of work and family life and support the equal participation of women and men in working life. In addition, all-day educational and childcare programmes can help to reduce inequality in educational opportunities. All-day care can thus contribute to improved social participation for parents and children in the medium term.

Alongside the expansion of needs-based childcare services and the introduction of a legal entitlement to all-day care for primary school children, a family-friendly working environment is essential for improving the compatibility of work and life and for sharing responsibilities as parents. With the Success Factor Family corporate programme, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, together with the central associations of German business (the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts) and the German Trade Union Confederation, supports HR and corporate managers in the (further) development of their family-friendly corporate culture. With around 9000 members to date, the network is the largest platform in Germany for all employers who are interested in or already committed to the issue of balancing work and family life.

Several million people suffer from loneliness in Germany. Loneliness primarily denotes retreating from society, thus threatening social and democratic cohesion in particular. In June 2022, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior

Citizens, Women and Youth therefore took the lead in launching the development of a German Government strategy to counter loneliness, which was adopted by the Cabinet on 13 December 2023. The focus is on all age groups with the objective of addressing the issue of loneliness in a more strategic manner in Germany. The strategy addresses the issue of loneliness in Germany for the first time in a comprehensive manner and with a wide range of measures. Using the GSDS transformation lever "Social mobilisation and participation", the strategy contributes to achieving SDG 3 (good health and well-being).

4. Spillover effects

A number of examples of spillover effects from area of transformation 1 are set out below.

Value added is often created across borders. Laws and regulations in the labour and economic spheres often lead to spillover effects as a result. The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act and the EU Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), deliberately use this lever to contribute to SDGs 1, 8 and 10 with positive spillover effects in mind and to avoid negative spillover effects, e.g. in the form of human rights violations along global supply chains.

In the international discussion on the UN SDGs, no spillover effects are currently mentioned in the area of human capabilities and education (source: Sustainable Development Report 2023). Negative and positive spillover effects may occur in this area, however.

Positive synergies are to be expected, particularly in the area of international tertiary education networks for sustainable development.

The migration of qualified professionals to Germany may lead to a reduction in the human resources available in the country of origin, a phenomenon known as "brain drain". In order to avoid this, the German Government's Skilled Labour Strategy takes into account international principles and guidelines for the ethically responsible recruitment of skilled workers, such as the WHO's Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel in the health sector. A holistic approach in a spirit of partnership is thus pursued in order to promote the interests of host countries, countries of origin and migrants in equal measure. Common approaches are being sought at EU level in addition to this.

II. Energy transition and climate action

Human-induced climate change is endangering natural resources and livelihoods worldwide and is one of the greatest challenges facing humankind.

Figure 4: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 2



The consequences of a global failure to meet the 1.5 degree target in the Paris Agreement range from increased extreme weather events, creeping climate change, destruction of habitats, loss of biological diversity and adverse effects on agricultural and food systems to structural change in economies and labour markets, and to increased social inequality and other dangers. This impacts in particular on women and girls in all their diversity as well as on already marginalised sections of the population, including, for example, children, members of indigenous communities, people who suffer from gender-based discrimination and people with disabilities.

Major emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) – like Europe and the United States, but also emerging economies such as China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and India – bear a particular responsibility to support the global transition towards sustainable economic systems and sustainable lifestyles. Successful decarbonisation must be one element of a broader process of social-ecological transformation and development. This process of transformation aims not only to respect environmental boundaries but also to sustainably secure our prosperity through national and global burden-sharing in a spirit of solidarity and to protect our freedom and security.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“Not even the idea of allegedly preserving prosperity by maintaining the status quo can be allowed to hamper ambitions to reduce greenhouse gases and transform the economy. If the world heats up by more than 1.5 degrees, which is the current trajectory, it will be considerably harder to preserve our current prosperity. This also needs to be borne in mind when communicating the progress made.”

Anonymous

SDG 13 (climate action) promotes measures to combat climate change and its impacts and in terms of GSDS indicators is measured on the basis of “Greenhouse gas emissions” and “International climate finance”. SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and is measured on the basis of various indicators demonstrating the share of renewable energy and energy consumption.

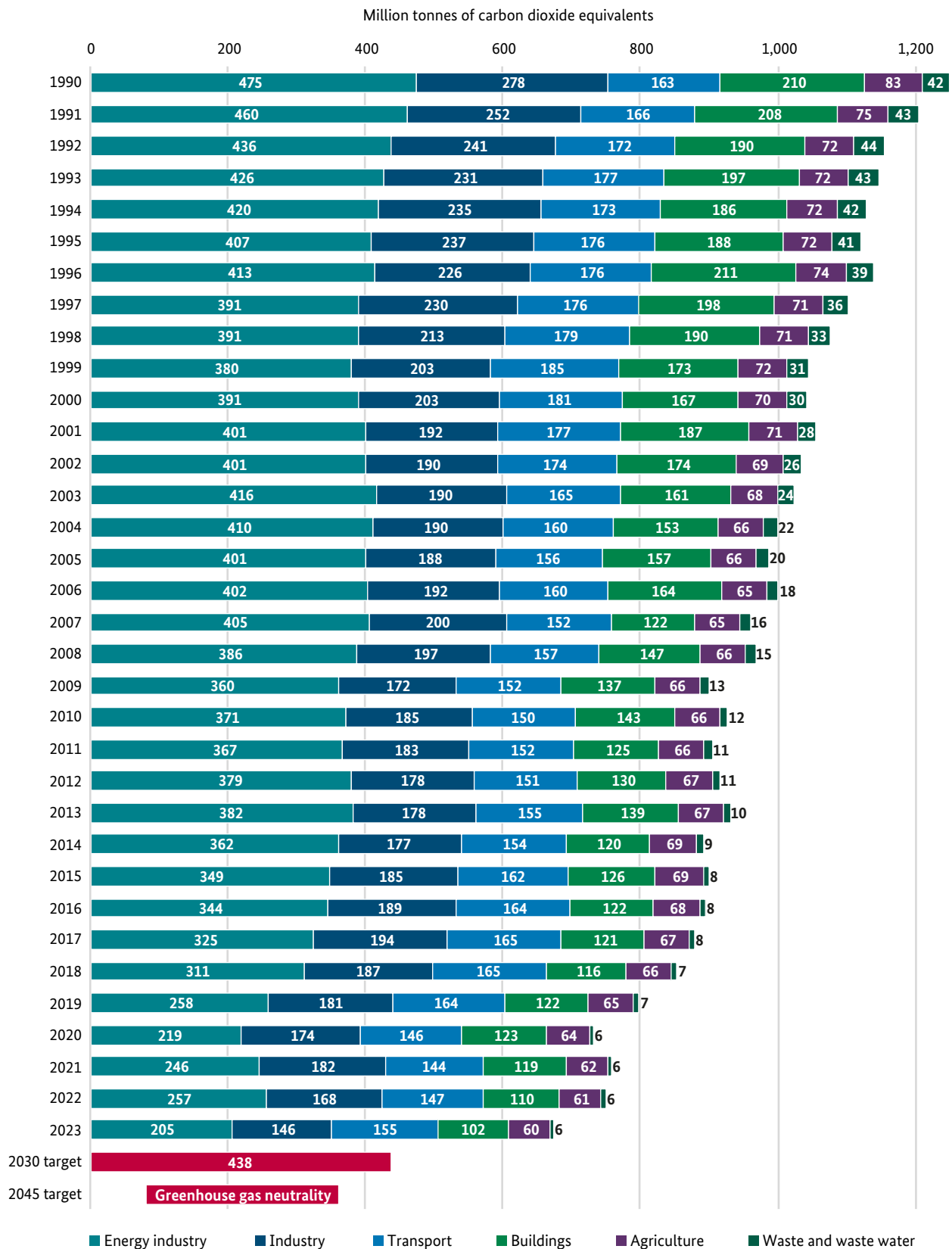
1. Aims

a) Making effective and efficient contributions to climate action

The central framework for climate policy in Germany is set at European level. With the 2021 European Climate Law, the EU committed to more ambitious climate targets for 2030 (an at least 55% reduction in GHG emissions as compared to 1990) and 2050 (greenhouse gas neutrality). The EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) has been a key instrument of EU climate action since 2005. It covers greenhouse gas emissions from energy-intensive industries, from parts of the energy sector and, since 2012, from intra-European aviation, and thus originally covered about half of the greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. By setting caps, the EU ETS I specifies the total amount that these installations subject to emissions trading rules are allowed to emit. As a result of above-average reductions in emissions, the EU ETS I now only covers approximately 40% of GHG emissions.

European climate legislation also provides considerable incentives for climate action in the member states. The EU ETS I in particular influences companies’ and households’ investment and consumption decisions in keeping with the climate targets. In addition, with the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) to reduce emissions in sectors not covered by the EU ETS I and to preserve and expand natural carbon sinks in the land-use sector, all EU member states have committed to attaining national targets through adequate national measures. The Federal Climate Action Act (KSG) adopted by the German Bundestag commits the state to the goal of greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045 and has established a cross-sector, multi-annual adjustment mechanism for the reliable achievement of this goal. By attaining these goals, Germany will also be making a contribution to the achievement of the EU climate targets. In the past few years, the German Government has taken crucial steps towards attaining the 2030 climate target: whereas at the beginning of the legislative term the forecast was a reduction of only 49% in greenhouse gases, current projection data suggests a much bigger fall of nearly 64%.

Figure 5: Emission of greenhouse gases covered by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change



The figures are from November 2024 and may have changed with subsequent updates since then.
Source: German Environment Agency.

The projection data from 2024 shows that achieving the 2030 climate targets will be within our grasp if the energy transition and the transformation of the heating and transport sectors are systematically continued. On the basis of the reduction roadmaps for the individual sectors relevant for monitoring pursuant to Annex 2a of the revised Federal Climate Action Act, the energy and industrial sectors in particular will be more than meeting their targets in the period 2021 to 2030. The agricultural and waste management sectors are also more than meeting their targets. In the building and transport sectors, the emissions stipulated in the Federal Climate Action Act for the period 2021 to 2030 will probably be exceeded. Measures in the building and transport sectors are addressed in area of transformation 4 (cf. [chapter B.IV](#)). Further action is needed if we are to attain the 2030 targets (Federal Climate Action Act, Effort Sharing Regulation).

It is agreed in the German Government's 2030 Climate Action Programme that the German Government will present a reform concept for phasing out climate-damaging subsidies or redesigning them in such a way that they are less harmful to the climate. The German Government is lobbying for the phasing out of inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels, as pledged in the G7 and G20 frameworks and at COP27, to be driven forward at international level, too. All subsidies in the 2023 29th Subsidy Report are for the first time being subjected to a mandatory review with respect to their impact on the climate.

Specifically, this review takes the form of identifying state subsidies which are harmful to the climate, assessing their negative impact on the environment and climate and coming up with possible reform options. In each case, the decision to phase out a subsidy is a matter of weighing up different interests. The social repercussions are also taken into account.

As well as ambitious targets, sustainable climate action requires the transformation to greenhouse gas neutrality to take place in an economically viable as well as socially and environmentally acceptable way.

Limiting global warming generally helps to prevent social inequalities from worsening even further. After all, poor and less well-off people suffer most as a result of climate change. In addition, when shaping climate policy instruments, distribution effects and the polluter-pays principle must also be borne in mind. For instance, the polluter-pays principle is important in carbon pricing. The distribution effect is an important aspect in the Carbon Dioxide Cost Sharing Act, which divides the costs of carbon pricing between building owners and tenants, with their respective shares depending on the building's energy performance.

Statement from the dialogue group:

“Social climate policy and transformation policy must be considered in tandem right from the outset. The aim should be to create good jobs and ensure good value creation.”

**German Trade Union Confederation (DGB),
Jan Philipp Rohde**

2. Ensuring a clean, reliable and affordable energy supply

A secure supply of affordable and increasingly greenhouse gas-neutral energy is a key prerequisite for maintaining prosperity in Germany. In principle, openness to all technological possibilities and the harnessing of constant progress are important preconditions for the success and efficiency of the energy transition.

Shifting the energy system from fossil fuels to regenerative energy sources poses different challenges in urban and rural areas. Owing to the availability of raw materials and land outside settled areas in rural regions, for example, this is where many renewable energy facilities and much of the installed capacity are to be found. In light of building structures and the need for mobility, there are also huge differences between the challenges faced by rural areas and conurbations in switching to greenhouse gas-neutral heating and mobility. It will be vital to take account of and acknowledge the challenges and contributions of rural areas in appropriate ways, also with regard to urban areas. The transition towards more decentralised energy production also affords rural areas tremendous opportunities, especially to increase regional value creation. To that end, we must ensure that the transformation is to the benefit of rural areas as well.

The amount of electricity generated by renewable energies has increased 7.5 times over in comparison with the figure in 2000. In 2023, renewable energies accounted for 52.5% of gross electricity consumption. The 2023 Renewable Energy Sources Act stipulates that the share of renewable energies in gross electricity consumption be increased to at least 80% by 2030 and that after the phase-out from coal has been completed, the aim should be a greenhouse gas-neutral electricity supply. The fact that a high proportion of electricity consumption in Germany is already met by renewables makes the country more independent of fossil fuel imports and their rising price on the global market. Alongside the rapid, environmentally friendly and cost-efficient expansion of

renewable energies, we need to develop and expand all the relevant infrastructure. On both the generation and the demand side, there is a need for greater flexibility; energy efficiency must be increased, and the electricity system and related incentives must be adapted. Given the weather-related fluctuations in energy generation from wind and photovoltaics, a mix of various renewable energy technologies will be required for a functioning energy system. Basically, in order to overcome daily and seasonal fluctuations in wind and solar energy production as well as in the demand for energy, it will in future be crucial not only to continue to expand renewables, expand the grid and strengthen the EU internal market, but also to expand storage facilities and other climate-friendly technologies, such as pumped storage, large battery storage systems or hydrogen conversion and storage, as well as controllable loads (e.g. electrolyzers) and production capacity (e.g. hydrogen power plants).

Further, the updated National Hydrogen Strategy envisages hydrogen and its derivatives becoming established more quickly and to a greater extent as energy sources and raw materials in Germany. The aim is to meet the expected, dynamically growing demand in Germany and thus to realise the technological switchover to hydrogen. In addition, the development of international hydrogen value chains is to be driven forward. One major field of action is the expansion, funding and regulation of the hydrogen infrastructure, in particular a hydrogen core network, but also other infrastructure such as ports, import terminals and storage facilities. The German Government aims to ensure a reliable supply of green and permanently sustainable hydrogen for Germany. In order to ensure the rapid development and ramp-up of the hydrogen market and meet the expected level of demand, particularly during the transition phase, and thus facilitate the technological shift to hydrogen, at least until an adequate supply of green hydrogen is available, other hydrogen colours will also be used, in particular low-carbon hydrogen produced from waste or natural gas combined with carbon capture and storage (CCS).

Colours of hydrogen

Hydrogen is generally always a colourless gas. Depending on how it is produced, however, different colours are attached to its name.

Green hydrogen is produced by electrolysis of water using electricity from renewable energy sources.

Blue hydrogen is grey hydrogen in whose production CO₂ is a by-product, but some of it is trapped and stored in the ground (carbon capture and storage, CCS).

Orange hydrogen is hydrogen produced on the basis of waste and residues.

Turquoise hydrogen is made using a process called methane pyrolysis, in which methane is broken down at high temperatures. This produces solid carbon, which does not escape into the atmosphere, unlike CO₂. The methane pyrolysis process is currently still being developed.

EU regulation, meanwhile, merely covers renewable and low-carbon hydrogen. Grey hydrogen is created mainly from fossil natural gas using steam methane reformation. This process produces around ten tonnes of CO₂ per tonne of hydrogen. The CO₂ is released into the atmosphere. This form of hydrogen must be replaced by climate-friendly hydrogen.

a) Driving a global reduction in GHG emissions

In its most recent report of March 2023, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) urgently reiterates that in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century in line with the Paris Agreement, immediate and deep greenhouse gas emission reductions are needed in all regions of the world and in all sectors. Continuing climate change will lead to the loss of vital natural resources and endanger entire ecosystems, for instance through the exceeding of tipping points and their feedbacks in the Earth's system. For efforts in Germany and the EU to be reflected in markedly falling greenhouse gas emissions globally as well, greater emphasis must be placed on international climate policy.

One big challenge posed to international climate policy is the cost of ambitious climate action measures at national level. Even if they do not implement measures of their own, actors benefit from the efforts of others. However, the amount and distribution of transformation costs on the path to greenhouse gas neutrality influence decisions on where businesses choose to invest, and thus also emissions trends in other countries. For example, without comparable pricing of GHG emissions, there may be an uneven playing field in international competition and therefore carbon leakage – in other words, a relocation rather than a reduction of GHG emissions, e.g. from Germany and the EU to trading partners.

The prime goal of international cooperation on climate action – namely to drive the implementation of the Paris Agreement so as to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C within reach – requires measures that are more binding, a greater level of ambition and more joint endeavours by the countries represented in the international forums. Effectively avoiding carbon leakage and enhancing dialogue

on decarbonisation measures, e.g. in the industrial sector, in the Climate Club, and in the energy and building sectors, will help make this goal achievable.

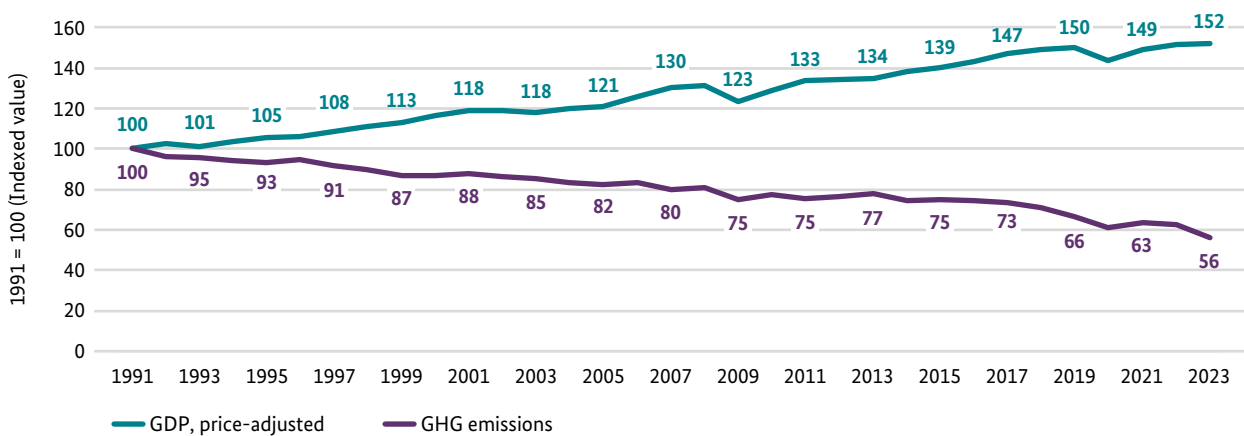
In order to raise international ambition for the goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, Germany is engaged at international level for ambitious agreements to reduce GHG emissions (“pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”, Paris Agreement, 2.1a).

In Dubai in 2023, the need to transition away from fossil fuels was recognised and further global targets to reduce emissions by 2030 were agreed, notably tripling the use of renewables and doubling energy efficiency, reducing methane emissions and other non-carbon emissions, and accelerating low-emission and net zero technologies, especially in areas that are difficult to decarbonise. There were also calls for enhanced efforts to halt or reverse deforestation by 2030. Following demands from vulnerable countries over many years, agreement

was reached on a Loss and Damage Fund and other funding instruments for responding to loss and damage caused by climate change. Germany played a crucial role here as one of the first donors.

At the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN Climate Change Conference, COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024, the Parties agreed on a new climate finance goal for 2035. Following difficult negotiations, it was decided to triple the previous target for international climate finance for developing countries from 100 billion US dollars per year to 300 billion US dollars by 2035, including publicly mobilised private financing. Furthermore, agreement was reached on setting the goal of mobilising a total of 1.3 trillion US dollars per year by 2035, including private finance. Countries which have seen strong growth in their economies and emissions since the conclusion of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 will now also be called on to report and make their contributions to climate finance.

Figure 6: Relative development of Germany’s GHG emissions and real GDP



Source: Federal Statistical Office, German Environment Agency

Decisions on the further implementation of the decisions on reductions made at COP28 failed in the face of resistance from a few Parties. Thus the necessary breakthrough on the phase-out of fossil fuels did not happen; the findings of the previous year’s Global Stocktake, however, were confirmed.

The priority now is to resolutely implement the decisions taken at COP28 and COP29 through concrete measures. Future climate conferences must, however, send much stronger signals for cuts in emissions.

It will be vital, for example, for the next UN Climate Conference in Brazil in 2025 to agree specific approaches to implementing the targets agreed in 2023.

In this connection, Germany is making an ambitious contribution to achieving the targets and is supporting partner countries in their own endeavours. In the context of development policy, too, Germany is campaigning consistently for the attainment of the goal of clean, reliable and affordable energy for all.

b) Strengthening innovation and scaling of greenhouse gas-neutral technologies

Since 1990 the German economy has seen continuous growth with decreasing GHG emissions in absolute terms and has thus succeeded in substantially decoupling its absolute GHG emissions and its real gross domestic product (GDP). In concrete terms, the real value of domestically produced goods and services rose by around 53% between 1990 and 2023, whilst GHG emissions – measured in carbon dioxide equivalents – fell by about 46%. Thus the GHG intensity of the value chain was cut by 60% over that period.

The transformation has become markedly more dynamic, but must become even more so if the targets are to be reached. In this context, the focus in the coming years will increasingly be on innovations and the scaling of technologies that enhance energy and materials efficiency, replace fossil fuels and raw materials with regenerative energy sources, and enable the use of sustainable resources within the framework of sustainable availability in all areas of use. This goes hand in hand with the fundamental restructuring of production processes and applications, often using electricity-based technologies.

Against this background, the importance of advances in innovation in the context of greenhouse gas-neutral technologies is key to a successful transformation for three reasons:

- In a system of capped GHG emissions, such as exists in the EU thanks to the emissions trading scheme, the accelerated spread of greenhouse gas-neutral technologies and processes reduces the costs associated with the transition to greenhouse gas neutrality, for both the economy and individual consumers.
- In the current system with a “flexible cap” for a large proportion of the GHG emissions, national measures to promote innovation in the relevant sectors in Germany are also helping to ensure larger emissions reductions in the EU as a whole.
- Not least by stepping up investment in research and development and through market scaling in the field of greenhouse gas-neutral technologies, Germany is making an effective contribution to worldwide cost degression and thus to the international availability and applicability of greenhouse gas-neutral technologies. Initiating cost reductions through innovation and technological advances can in this connection have a positive impact on international coordination problems and climate action measures of other countries.

3. Measures taken

a) Further developments at EU and national level

The German Government contributed constructively to negotiations on the European Commission’s Fit for 55 package. European climate and energy legislation was adapted to the EU’s ambitious climate targets for 2030, accelerating the transition to a greenhouse gas-neutral, competitive economy envisaged in the European Green Deal. The bulk of the legislative proposals entered into force in 2023.

Within the scope of the Fit for 55 package, a comprehensive revision of the European Emissions Trading Scheme was agreed. Among other things, the reduction of the emission ceiling in the EU ETS I was increased (EU ETS I: –62% in 2030 as compared to 2005, previously –43%); the Market Stability Reserve – the instrument to address historical surpluses of allowances – is being continued in an ambitious manner, and the share of emissions in international shipping accounted for by the EU will be integrated into the existing EU ETS I.

The German Government also lobbied for the Emissions Trading Scheme to be extended to buildings, road transport and small industrial installations (EU ETS II). The EU ETS II is a milestone in European climate policy: from 2027 it will apply an EU-wide uniform carbon price to fuels. The national fuel emissions trading system that has been in place in Germany since 2021 is to be integrated into the EU ETS II as part of an act adapting the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Act in line with the amendment of Directive 2003/87/EC. Together with the ETS, this means that up to around 75% of all EU GHG emissions will in future be tied to ever fewer emissions allowances. Via the Social Climate Fund, some of the income will be used to cushion the social impact of carbon pricing on the most affected vulnerable groups, e.g. low-income households, households in transport poverty and microenterprises. Care will be taken to ensure that this social support is implemented in a transparent manner with a minimum of red-tape.

In order to prevent carbon leakage, i.e. the relocation of emission-intensive production to countries outside the EU, the system has so far provided for the particularly affected energy and trade-intensive industries to receive free emissions allowances. At the same time as it was decided to gradually introduce a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, it was also decided to gradually phase out the system of free emissions allowances.

Alongside the reform of the ETS, the Fit for 55 package contains a host of other goals and measures. The Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) obliges member states to implement

measures at national level to cut emissions in the transport, buildings, agriculture, waste and small industry sectors (–40% in total for the aforementioned sectors across the EU by 2030 compared with 2005, –50% for Germany). In parallel, the member states must ensure they maintain and improve carbon capture and storage in ecosystems, especially in forests and natural moors (Regulation on land use, land use change and forestry – LULUCF). The EU Regulation on nature restoration and national restoration plans are intended to secure sink capacities and natural resources in the long term and contribute to the goals of the EU Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The revised EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) stipulates that 42.5% of gross final energy consumption should come from renewable energies by 2030, an increase from the previous target of 32%. The EU Methane Regulation was adopted in order to sustainably reduce methane emissions from the fossil energy sector. In future, methane emissions generated by energy imports into the EU will also have to be taken into account and from 2030 there will be a binding ceiling on them. The agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) sets a target for EU energy consumption to be reduced by 11.7% by 2030 compared to a reference scenario. Moreover, for the first time, uniform criteria are laid down for the member states, from which the national contributions towards implementing this EU target are derived.

In addition, the Fit for 55 package comprises further legislative instruments, providing among other things for more ambitious standards for buildings (EPBD) and transport (fleet standards), as well as revised requirements for the development of a climate-friendly transport infrastructure in the EU (AFIR) and measures in the maritime and aviation sectors (Fuel EU Maritime and ReFuelEU Aviation).

With the 2023 Climate Action Programme (KSP), the German Government adopted a substantial package of measures in Cabinet. The 2023 KSP also contains the immediate action programmes for the building and transport sectors necessitated by the failure of these sectors to meet their targets in 2022 in accordance with the Federal Climate Action Act. With the 2023 KSP, the climate action gap is likely to shrink by about 900 million tonnes – i.e. by up to 80%. The projection data from 2024 shows that attaining the 2030 climate targets will be a tangible possibility if the German Government sticks to its course in implementing the measures. So ambitious and consistent implementation is necessary if the intended reduction is to be achieved. On the one hand, national measures help to meet mandatory national targets. On the other, they can help to limit the expected increase in European carbon prices – depending on the field in question, in the EU ETS I and/or the future EU ETS II – and thus also reduce the need for accompanying social and business location policy measures in all member states.

In November 2022, the German Government adopted the National Moor Protection Strategy. It outlines the current state of moorland soil protection in Germany and contains numerous targets and measures designed to protect moors, rewet previously drained moorlands and moorland soils, and ensure their sustainable use.

The Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity (ANK) adopted by the German Government in March 2023 combines climate action with nature conservation and is intended to make a fundamental contribution to significantly improving the general state of ecosystems in Germany and thus strengthening their resilience and their role in climate action. Nature-based climate action measures aim to preserve and, if possible, enhance the impact of terrestrial or marine ecosystems in climate action, while preserving biodiversity.

b) Setting the course for a faster energy transition

Since the start of this legislative term, the German Government has very rapidly reduced obstacles to the expansion of renewable energies and of the necessary grid infrastructure and has laid the foundations for markedly speedier processes. Initial successes of this approach can already be seen in the accelerating expansion of power generation from renewable sources. Given the realisation periods, particularly in the case of onshore and offshore wind energy, the full impact will be seen in the coming years.

The Federation-*Länder* Pact for the Acceleration of Planning and Approval adopted in November 2023 has also helped to speed up procedures for the development of electricity grids for renewables. The Pact provides for more than one hundred measures designed to streamline processes, modernise legislation and make processes more digital.

The System Development Strategy (SES) sets an overall framework for the coordination of interconnections in energy transformation, consumer sectors and energy infrastructures. In July 2022, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat adopted the biggest energy policy legislative package for decades, the energy emergency package (also known as the “Easter package” and “summer package”). The revised Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) (which envisages, inter alia, that 80% of requirements be met by renewables by 2030; 2023 Renewable Energy Sources Act entered into force on 1 January 2023), the Offshore Wind Energy Act (WindSeeG, which raises targets for expansion and redesigns the bidding process) and the revised Energy Industry Act (EnWG, providing inter alia for accelerated expansion of the grid) are intended to considerably speed up the expansion of renewable energies.

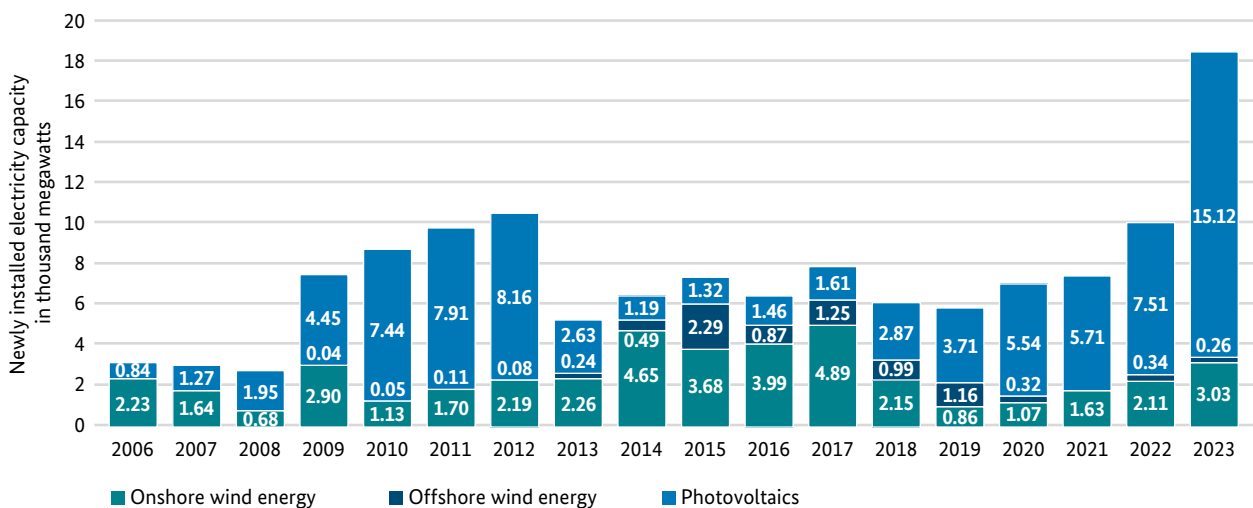
Further measures have also been decided upon in the Bundestag:

- Onshore Wind Act with the Wind Energy Area Requirements Act to implement the 2% designated areas target for onshore wind energy (regulations in the Federal Building Code (BauGB) on legal consequences of failure to meet the designated areas target, on the simplification of planning processes and on the “Länder opening clause”, as well as regulations on the monitoring of the designated areas target in the Renewable Energy Sources Act)
- Amendment of the Federal Nature Conservation Act (BNatSchG) to accelerate the ecologically compatible expansion of onshore wind energy (simplified approval procedures)
- EU emergency regulation (2022/2577) and its implementation in the framework of the amended Spatial Planning Act to speed up planning processes
- In addition, numerous obstacles were removed, for example through support for community energy (funding programme for community energy companies for onshore wind energy).

Within the scope of the Onshore Wind Strategy and Photovoltaic Strategy, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action has developed further packages designed to help reach the targets for the expansion of renewable energies. Some of the measures in these packages (measures to expand ground-mounted and rooftop PV installations, make landlord-to-tenant electricity more accessible, speed up grid connections and generally reduce red tape) have been implemented with Solar Package I. The German Government aims, moreover, for all suitable rooftops to be used for solar energy in future. The bill approved by the Cabinet to implement the third Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) in the spheres of onshore wind energy and solar energy is intended to speed things further.

The expansion of the transmission and distribution grids is a key prerequisite for the success of the energy transition. In 2022, the German Government improved the conditions for anticipatory grid expansion in order to take account at an early stage of grid planning of the connections needed by new consumers and renewable energy installations. The German Government is continuing to work on speeding up planning and approval procedures in particular and thus to advance expansion on all grid levels in good time in line with demand.

Figure 7: Net installed capacity additions for power generation from renewables



The figures are from September 2024 and may have changed with subsequent updates since then.
Source: Federal Network Agency

Through various legislative proposals, support mechanisms and strategies, the German Government is driving the national and global market ramp-up of hydrogen and its derivatives as well as the related rapid, anticipatory development of the necessary transport and storage infrastructure. Explicit hydrogen agreements have already been concluded with numerous partner countries outside the EU, and cooperation within the scope of existing energy partnerships and dialogues is being stepped up with a number of yet other partner countries.

The Energy Efficiency Act (EnEg) serves to implement the revised EU Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and for the first time establishes a cross-sectoral framework to enhance energy efficiency and sets specific energy savings targets. The Energy and Resource Efficiency in Commerce programme has played a large role in reducing final energy consumption in commerce and industry since 2019.

The increasing share of decentralised renewable energies, their integration into the electricity supply system and the increasing demand for electricity are posing new challenges to the electricity system. The German Government is working intensively, as it did in the negotiations on the reform of the EU electricity market design, on the issues and challenges surrounding the electricity market design of the future.

c) International partnerships for climate action

In order to raise international ambitions on climate action with the aim of achieving the 1.5°C target, Germany is engaged at international level for ambitious agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At COP28 in Dubai, the German Government lobbied with the EU for a sincere Global Stocktake of the world's efforts to address climate change. The COP declaration reaffirms that global efforts to date are not enough to stabilise global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100. The international community confirmed the reduction pathways needed for 1.5°C with a reduction of 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035 as well as net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050. These are linked with specific reduction measures up until 2030 to which all Parties are to contribute: the gradual transitioning away from fossil fuels with the aim of restricting global warming to 1.5°C, together with the global targets to triple the use of renewables and double the annual rate of improvement in energy efficiency worldwide by 2030, the reduction of methane emissions and other non-carbon emissions and the acceleration of low-emission and net zero technologies, particularly in areas that are difficult to decarbonise.

It is true that no agreement was reached at COP29 in Baku on concrete steps to implement the aforementioned measures. However, thanks to a broad-based coalition of ambitious states, it was possible to prevent a weakening of the mile-

stones reached at COP28, despite counter-movements by some states. The decisions taken in Dubai form an important basis for the new nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for the period 2030–2035, which have to be presented in 2025. They are to cover all sectors and greenhouse gases and be in line with the 1.5°C pathway.

Another key outcome of COP27 and COP28 was the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund – thus responding to decades of calls from the particularly vulnerable countries. The fund aims, through programmatic approaches, to sustainably strengthen the way in which loss and damage caused by climate change in the most vulnerable countries is dealt with.

Further, COP28 anchored the role of nature in climate action – in the form of the protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems – as a central approach, closely linked to the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It was also agreed at COP28 to stop global deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, and to resolutely advance the circular economy. The decisions taken at COP28 acknowledge the special needs of the developing countries and the need to support them, including through technology transfers, for a socially just energy transition.

While COP28 was taking place in Dubai, the German Government adopted its first Strategy on Climate Foreign Policy, which will guide its international climate action. The focus is on the following six action areas, which involve concrete priorities, goals and activities ([chapter B.II.3.b](#)):

1. Drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, accelerating the global energy transition
2. Making the economy competitive and fit for the future and ensuring climate justice
3. Solidarity with the most vulnerable: preserving our natural resources and protecting health
4. Protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of ecosystems
5. Strengthening resilience, peace and security
6. Making international financial flows consistent with a 1.5°C-compatible pathway and climate-resilient development

The highlight of COP29 in Baku was the decision on setting a new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG). This decision on a new goal by 2035 marked a new approach to climate finance. At the same time, although COP29 did not reach agreement on concrete steps to implement the

goals of COP28 – primarily tripling the rate of expansion of renewable energies, doubling energy efficiency and transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems – there was no weakening of these milestones, thanks to a broad-based coalition of ambitious states. After years of negotiations, COP29 finalised the remaining outstanding guidelines on voluntary carbon markets – the last part of the Paris Agreement rules that remained open, and one which is of significance especially for companies and for cooperation between industrialised and developing countries. The renewal and extension of the Work Programme on Gender and Climate Change was another success. Progress was also made on the Indicator Work Programme towards adaptation.

The international Climate Club was set up during Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022. The Climate Club – which now numbers 43 members, industrialised countries, emerging economies and developing countries from around the world – began working actively following the full launch at COP28. It has established itself internationally as a central forum for the ambitious decarbonisation of industry and has, within a very short space of time, come to play a key role in the international discourse at the interface between climate action, green economic growth and industry. The Climate Club aims to be an inclusive, intergovernmental forum that contributes to the ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement in the field of industrial decarbonisation. The Climate Club Work Programme 2024 adopted by members includes activities to promote ambitious, transparent climate action policies and measures as well as the transformation of industries. International cooperation and partnerships with emerging economies and developing countries to decarbonise their industries are actively promoted. The discussion of common framework conditions, such as standards for green industrial products, is intended to ensure investment in sustainable industrial technologies, the expansion of demand for green products and the avoidance of climate-damaging lock-in effects in fossil production processes in upcoming investments.

Key Climate Club deliverables in 2024 were presented at COP29, including a joint understanding of carbon leakage, support for the IEA principles on the definitions of green steel and cement, and the recognition of convergence on threshold values for low-emission and emission-free steel and cement production. In addition, the Global Matchmaking Platform began its work as a central support instrument for emerging economies and developing countries. Activities planned in 2025–2026 include the establishment of a scientific expert body on industrial decarbonisation, the continuation of the strategic dialogues on carbon leakage and other spillover effects, the further development of work on definitions and standards for green steel and cement, of a joint approach to demand- and supply-oriented measures such as green public procurement and lead markets, and the further development of the Global Matchmaking Platform and

capacity-building measures. In this context, Germany is making a substantial contribution towards supporting industrial decarbonisation in emerging economies and developing countries via the International Climate Initiative (ICI) and through its payments to the multilateral Climate Investment Funds (CIF).

The German Government supports partner countries in decarbonisation efforts in numerous other formats, too. With the plurilateral Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), the G7, along with other international partners, assists the partner countries in accelerating their socially just energy transition. To finance the ambitions of the JETP goals, the donor countries mobilise funds in cooperation with multilateral development banks and the private sector. The German Government further promotes bilateral energy partnerships with more than 30 countries, as well as ten bilateral and one regional climate and development partnerships (P+) worldwide. In this way, the German Government supports partner countries important in terms of climate action with decarbonisation and with adaptation to the effects of climate change.

At international level, the German Government is a reliable partner in the provision of climate finance. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently made this clear again at COP28. Alongside market funds mobilised by public funds and private-sector investment, Germany made a major contribution (9.9 billion euro) towards achieving the collective goal of making 100 billion US dollars available annually for international climate finance. With bilateral climate finance, Germany's contribution to the multilateral development banks and the multilateral climate funds, and support for international programmes and initiatives such as the NDC Partnership and the ICI, the German Government is promoting solutions in developing and emerging countries to help them implement and further develop their NDCs in an ambitious manner. This also includes measures to adapt to the effects of climate change, to preserve biodiversity, to protect forests and to preserve and rebuild natural carbon sinks, taking into account environmental, economic and social concerns.

In addition, the German Government has drawn up a climate strategy for the guarantee instruments of foreign trade and investment promotion with which the range of instruments is aligned with the pathway set forth in the Paris Agreement. The aim is to strengthen green exports and investment through simplified underwriting processes.

The gradual termination of the existing measures to protect against carbon leakage (in particular free allocation) and the transition to the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in the EU strengthen the polluter-pays principle not only internally but also externally. The incentives for producers in non-EU countries to increasingly decarbonise their production for import into the EU will be enhanced,

thereby reducing the costs of CBAM. In addition, trading partners also have an incentive to reduce the cost of CBAM for their exports to the EU by introducing carbon pricing and at the same time to generate income for themselves from carbon pricing. When it comes to the further development of the CBAM, a particular priority will be to take account of the risks of carbon leakage for individual product groups and the administrative burden for authorities and companies. Via the Climate Club, emerging and developing countries are supported as they seek to decarbonise their economies.

d) Promoting innovation before and after market readiness

The German Government's climate and energy policy measures address innovation potential and the scaling of technologies in various respects. The German Government is promoting technological progress in the decarbonisation of industry through various programmes. The "Decarbonisation in Industry" programme and the "KlimProIndustrie" funding measure support energy-intensive (primary) industries (including steel, chemicals, cement) in developing and investing in innovative climate-friendly technologies for the avoidance of greenhouse gas process emissions. Furthermore, up until 2027, the German Government is promoting applied R&D projects under the Lightweighting Technology Transfer Programme, which is open to all technologies and sectors.

The carbon contracts for difference (CCfDs) funding programme helps companies from emission-intensive sectors to invest in climate-friendly production facilities. CCfDs shield companies against price risks (e.g. of hydrogen or carbon dioxide), thereby creating secure investment conditions in Germany and advancing the transformation of industry. At the same time, however, the state also benefits from the economic opportunities afforded by a shift to climate-friendly technologies, as companies pay money to the state on the basis of the CCfD to the extent that green production is profitable without state support. CCfDs are intended to give impetus to the transformation of industry in Germany. Technology learning curves for climate-friendly production processes are to be sped up by means of transitional funding for first industrial applications, to ensure wide-ranging market-driven applications. Thus, in the medium term, state support will become superfluous.

Greenhouse gas-neutral primary industry is inconceivable today without the use of hydrogen. Further support measures such as those under the Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI) Hydrogen programme promote the market ramp-up of hydrogen technologies along the entire value chain. The 24 projects submitted by Germany that were part of the "infrastructure wave" (Hy2Infra) and that were given the go-ahead by the European Commission on 15 February 2024 have received their funding approval notices and can now embark on implementation. The Ger-

man Government and the relevant *Länder* plan to contribute approximately 4.6 billion euro to the German IPCEI Hydrogen projects. The projects approved by the European Commission in 2022 as part of the Hy2Tech and Hy2Use waves are already being implemented. The IPCEI Hydrogen projects range from the production of green hydrogen to infrastructure and the use of hydrogen in industry and for mobility. By giving support for the high initial investment costs, the state is hedging the investment risks at the start of the market ramp-up in order to overcome hurdles and promote "learning by doing" and cost-effective market scaling via private-sector investment.

The German Government has also adopted key principles for a Carbon Management Strategy, to outline areas of application as well as the legal, ecological and economic framework conditions for carbon capture and utilisation (CCU) and carbon capture and storage (CCS) and to enable the technology's ramp-up. The revised Federal Climate Action Act sees the introduction of a target for technical sinks like bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) or direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS). In this connection, the German Government is elaborating a long-term negative emissions strategy intended to ensure that the role of negative emissions is taken into comprehensive account in German climate policy up until 2060. The principles for the long-term negative emissions strategy were published in February 2024. In order to realise the necessary levels of negative emissions in good time, the German Government is, among other things, funding research into land-based and ocean-based carbon dioxide removal.

As a strategic element of energy policy, the German Government's support for energy research – from basic research to applied research – is consistently geared towards the realisation of the energy transition and, in the spirit of preparing for the future, the time beyond. For the field of applied energy research, the mission-oriented 8th Energy Research Programme for Applied Energy Research, which, with its five missions (energy system, heat transition, electricity transition, hydrogen and practical transfer), is consistently oriented towards energy policy goals, provides the framework for effectively supporting the transformation of the energy system. In particular, the funding is intended to spark and accelerate technology development and transfer by furthering the transformation to a greenhouse gas-neutral energy sector by 2045 and to create a favourable environment for innovation.

With its Future Research and Innovation Strategy, the Federal Government is placing research and innovation policy on a new footing in order to improve the conditions for research and innovation. The key aim of the Future Research and Innovation Strategy is to tackle the global challenges as innovation policy goals and to implement this in a mission-oriented manner across all ministries. With the creation of

interministerial mission teams, the Future Research and Innovation Strategy is making a crucial contribution to establishing new forms of interministerial cooperation and to breaking down the oft-criticised silo mentality. As an independent advisory body, the Forum #Future Strategy observes the implementation and further development of the Future Research and Innovation Strategy and is in direct contact with the interministerial mission teams. The six missions of the Future Strategy reflect various connections to the transformation teams.

The Federal Agency for Breakthrough Innovation (SPRIND) established by the German Government has been promoting innovation with disruptive potential since 2019. SPRIND aims to find solutions to social, ecological and economic challenges in order to create new value added and new jobs. SPRIND works agilely and flexibly, is more open to taking risks than traditional funding programmes and is far more autonomous. To date, SPRIND has supported particularly promising ideas with breakthrough potential within the scope of innovation contests (“Challenges”) and in subsidiaries. The new SPRIND Freedom Act will enable SPRIND to expand its financial instruments and will lead to speedier funding decisions and increased budgetary flexibility.

4. Next steps

a) Further developing EU climate policy

The legislative proposals realised as part of the Fit for 55 package are intended to implement the Green Deal and the target of transitioning to a greenhouse gas-neutral, competitive economy contained in it. It is vital that we continue along this path with a high level of ambition and in a socially compatible and competitive way. This will also be a major task for the newly elected European Commission. The revised Emissions Trading Directive, for example, provides for a review of the future inclusion of further emissions in the EU ETS, in particular from waste management.

Following the Global Stocktake at COP28 in Dubai, the European Commission is also called upon to submit a proposal for the EU climate target for 2040, which must then be decided on by the member states. The new EU NDC (the EU’s nationally determined contribution) for the 2030–2035 period, which as per the Paris Agreement has to be presented ahead of COP30 in 2025, will be derived from this.

b) Promoting and stimulating international climate action efforts

According to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2024, the international community’s current policy measures are leading to a world that is between 2.6 and 3.1°C warmer than pre-industrial levels. Therefore international climate policy needs to be stepped up. At the 2025 climate negotiations (COP30 in

Belém, Brazil), ambitious agreements on reduction will be crucial, participants in Baku having agreed only to adhere to the decisions from the previous year. Here, too, the focus must be on the conditions for implementing the global energy transition in an environmentally friendly, socially just manner. The focal point of COP30 will be the new, ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for 2030–2035, which must be submitted in 2025 and which cover all sectors and greenhouse gases and must align with the 1.5°C target. To this end, it is vital that the necessary halving of global emissions by 2030 be realised. The objectives set during the COP negotiations, especially those of the Global Stocktake, must be implemented via specific measures in all sectors. The German Government, together with the EU, will make additional efforts to incentivise and drive the attainment of the targets by the international community.

Germany will continue to engage, both at the international level in the G7, G20, OECD and Climate Club and in its support for developing countries building relevant instruments, for the development and expansion of effective carbon pricing and emissions trading systems that are socially just. Here, Germany aims to establish internationally compatible emissions trading and pricing systems with the medium term goal of ensuring an appropriate carbon price which is as uniform as possible. In a dynamic environment with differing levels of ambition on climate policy in different parts of the world, constant efforts must also be made to strengthen protection against carbon leakage. In this context, the agreed EU-wide carbon leakage rules must be further developed. It must be ensured that the instrument remains WTO-compatible and administratively manageable. The long-term goal should be for unilateral protection against carbon leakage to become unnecessary, thanks to international efforts to align climate policy ambitions and to decarbonise economies.

COP30 will in addition focus on preserving and restoring natural carbon sinks and in particular on protecting tropical rainforests.

c) Deliberately promoting and leveraging climate action innovations

Innovations and the scaling of technologies for avoiding greenhouse gases are important levers to align the transformation process with other SDGs. In order to drive the necessary innovations in a targeted manner, both government expenditure on investment in innovation cycles before market readiness and incentives for the use of available technologies are required. While the latter promise more concrete GHG reductions in the short term, investment to bring innovations to market is of great importance in the long term. Examples: the development of new battery storage technologies or approaches to hard-to-abate emissions in industrial processes. The promotion of “green” innovations avoids or reduces negative environmental externalities, contributes

to the necessary reduction of productivity gaps due to path dependencies, and makes use of the above-average spillover effects of green innovations into other technology areas. The Future Research and Innovation Strategy focuses on steering research and innovation activities towards societal and global challenges. The goal is for its mission orientation to be even more strongly anchored. With resources becoming more and more scarce, this mission orientation aims to support the prioritisation of future-oriented investments. At the same time, mission orientation does not conflict with the technology neutrality approach.

As before, climate policy must increasingly involve leveraging private investment. CCfDs and other measures mentioned above help to ensure investment and planning certainty and provide companies with incentives to invest and innovate in technologies to reduce greenhouse gases.

In the medium and long term, however, secure demand can support private investment in these technologies and innovations. With procurements totalling hundreds of billions per year, the public sector has a direct lever to create incentives for climate-friendly innovations. The German Government makes use of this leverage and, with the Competence Center for Sustainable Procurement, supports public contracting bodies in applying sustainability criteria in procurement processes. By instituting appropriate procurement rules, the state can create green lead markets for certain commodities produced in a greenhouse gas-neutral way, for instance “green” steel or cement. Possible levers here are labels, product standards and public procurement quotas and criteria.

5. Taking greater account of the social impact of climate action measures

Advancing climate change brings with it great changes. In this context, it must be remembered that high-income sections of the population make a substantially bigger contribution to climate change through their consumer behaviour than low-income groups. They can shoulder price increases caused by the transformation more easily than low-income households. At the same time, low-income sections of the population are often disproportionately hard-hit by the costs of the transformation. In the interest of the social-ecological transformation, solutions must therefore be found that combine climate action with social justice and take due account of the social, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Thus the social effects of climate action and environmental protection measures must be better anticipated so that the related burdens and unavoidable social hardships can in good time be minimised, compensated, or at least equitably distributed. Taking account of the social repercussions of climate policy ex ante in this way can be a crucial building-block to accelerating climate policy and improving society’s acceptance of climate action measures. With this in mind, the German Government decided as part of the 2023 Climate Action Programme to introduce a social monitoring system for climate protection which will in future analyse the social distribution effects of climate action measures even when these measures are being elaborated and which will plan measures in as socially equitable a way as possible. The newly established Social Climate Fund aims to help households and micro-entrepreneurs especially affected by European carbon pricing in the building and transport sectors from 2027 with decarbonisation and in the long term to protect them from increasing carbon costs. In order to be able to access the finance available to Germany from the Social Climate Fund from 2026, the German Government must draw up a national social climate plan by mid-2025 and present it to the Commission for approval.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“The municipalities play a decisive role in implementing the energy transition. They not only plan, coordinate and steer implementation at local level. They are the vital interface to the public and create the necessary degree of acceptance among members of the public.”

Association of German Cities

There exists considerable potential for involving local stakeholders in the energy transition. As the energy transition directly affects various aspects of people’s lives, involving local actors can improve acceptance of climate action. Members of the public, municipalities and companies locally can play an active part in the transition by investing in and operating their own renewable energy installations. There are also other ways for local stakeholders to become involved. The provisions of section 6 of the Renewable Energy Sources Act allow municipalities to benefit financially from local operators’ returns on their renewable energy installations. Many *Länder* have in the meantime established binding rules on financial participation, some of which include participation by members of the public.

6. Spillover effects

There are a few examples of spillover effects of the energy transition, too.

The energy transition comes with a significant increase in the demand for certain raw materials, which are often found predominantly in countries of the Global South: e.g. copper for the expansion of power grids, lithium and cobalt for electric mobility and iridium for electrolyzers. Consequently, the German Government supports the clean, environmentally friendly extraction and processing of raw materials in partner countries, taking account of environmental, social and human rights aspects. Further, it is committed to the expansion of the circular economy with a view to reducing demand for primary raw materials.

The German Government's endeavours to ramp up hydrogen are contributing to the sustainable transformation of both the German and the European economy. In accordance with the Import Strategy for hydrogen and hydrogen derivatives adopted by the German Government in July 2024, the German Government is supporting the establishment of and compliance with joint ambitious and workable sustainability standards and criteria and is working to update and harmonise these where necessary. It takes care to ensure that green hydrogen projects in partner countries support the expansion of renewable energies and the improvement of the local energy supply, in order to avoid negative impacts on local ecosystems, public health and incomes. Overall, the growing demand for hydrogen affords marked economic opportunities for exports and development, also for many countries of the Global South. The availability of natural resources, such as water, is not to be significantly impaired by hydrogen production in the producer states; in particular, hydrogen production must not cause water scarcity in the producer states. In decarbonising the transport sector, the benefits and risks of biofuels must be carefully weighed in order to avoid negative spillover effects. The sustainable, climate-friendly biofuels, with their limited availability, are an option for sectors that are difficult to decarbonise, such as aviation and shipping, or for special uses, for example in the military sphere. In principle, the production of biomass for the manufacture of biofuels can lead to more intensive land use and thus to negative, cross-border effects on biodiversity, water, the climate and food security. Biofuels should therefore be produced primarily from residues and waste.

Beyond the energy sector, comprehensive attention must be given to strategies and plans in other sectors, specific geographical and demographic features and the (possibly negative) effects of short- and long-term solutions. For example, given rising demand for raw materials and land, stopping deforestation and protecting and restoring forests and ecosystems here at home may lead to deforestation and damage to forests in other countries. Strengthening the national framework and improving monitoring will prevent activities from merely being shifted elsewhere and will help to quantify the effects on the climate. For agricultural products imported into the EU, the EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Supply Chains addresses the danger of deforestation through the call for traceability all along the supply chain.

III. Circular economy

The tangle of ongoing environmental crises, in particular the climate and biodiversity crisis and the littering and pollution of ecosystems, is at its core the result of the overexploitation of natural resources. This goes hand in hand with social challenges: in many countries, the exploitation of raw materials involves precarious working conditions as well as social conflicts that might be further inflamed as a result of direct and indirect consequences of the use of raw materials, such as extreme weather events and continuing scarcities. Moreover, the vulnerability of supply chains has increased in recent years owing to the emergence of new geopolitical trouble spots. Demand for raw materials that, given these challenges, cannot be met from local primary commodity production can be tangibly reduced by transitioning to a more circular economy.

The transition to a circular economy addresses precisely these challenges. The circular economy is a holistic approach that shapes the entire value creation cycle – from raw materials production to product design, manufacture and usage, to the return of materials at the end of the product's life cycle – in a sustainable manner.

Figure 8: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 3



At the same time, the circular economy affords an opportunity to manage the economy in a future-proof way by preserving natural resources for future generations and reducing the German economy's critical dependence on imported raw materials: products are used more intensively and for longer, recyclates are increasingly used instead of primary materials, and thus raw materials imports are replaced by secondary raw materials. Furthermore, the circular economy strengthens regional economic cycles, thereby additionally fostering opportunities for growth and good jobs locally.

Circularity is an important element of a future-oriented value creation process in Germany. Through circular economic management, waste can be avoided and, in combination with resource-saving technologies, new value creation and employment potential can be opened up in Germany and Europe; a substantial contribution can be made to easing problems of scarcity and dependence; biodiversity can be preserved; and an ambitious approach can be taken on the pathway towards climate neutrality. Germany can establish itself as a pioneer in circular technologies and circular production processes and thereby open up new value creation potential. According to the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), the circular economy optimises the value of products and the raw materials they contain by focusing on their entire life cycle. The example of the circular economy demonstrates how outstanding research in Germany can lead to products and business models that will make sustainable growth possible worldwide.

The idea of the circular economy can thus contribute to all dimensions of sustainability – climate action and the protection of resources as well as competitiveness, economic security and good jobs.

Since the 1990s, Germany has made huge advances in waste and circular management and now has one of the highest recycling rates in the world.

Viewing products or materials at the end of their life cycle as once again being raw materials is key to hastening the transformation to a circular economy. The aim is to strengthen and, wherever possible, expand and further develop established and effective systems, but also to come up with new processes.

Despite relatively high recycling rates, there is nonetheless considerable potential to optimise the circularity of the German economy: according to the EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework, for example, the proportion of recycled raw materials used in domestic industry in Germany, at 13%, is only slightly above the EU average.

In addition, there is at present a lack both of circular business models and of product design approaches oriented more towards circularity. Particularly against the background of

current market prices for raw materials, transport and waste disposal, linear production processes often cost less than circular processes.

To that extent, non-internalised external costs are a major hurdle in efforts to spread circularity.

1. Aims

Using the circular economy to leverage potential for the economy and environment

An effective circular economy will make a significant contribution to climate action. The recycling and reuse of materials means that fewer natural resources are needed; at the same time, the greenhouse gas emissions produced in the transportation, processing and disposal of raw materials are reduced. According to the most recent study by the International Resource Panel, greenhouse gas emissions could be cut by more than 80% compared to today's levels by 2060 in line with the Paris Agreement, alongside an absolute reduction in energy consumption, agricultural land use and other detrimental impacts.

The German Government aims to set the course for a circular economy, working together with the business community and civil society. Digitalisation plays a decisive role here – because digital information is the absolute essential for individual parts of the circle to mesh together. And: digitalisation and new data spaces are drivers of technology. In this framework, a resource-saving circular economy makes a vital contribution to climate action and to preserving biodiversity. At the same time, it can help to resolve the problems of scarcity and dependence by ensuring resource security. Technologies such as lightweighting play an important role here, as they help to cut primary raw materials consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time strengthen the economy's competitiveness and innovative capacity. Lightweighting thus offers a very good chance to align climate action and the conservation of resources with a sustainable increase in competitiveness. It is necessary to make use of the huge value creation potential for digitalisation, new technologies, innovations and enhancing competitiveness, not least in the SME sector.

Positive note should be taken of the growing public interest in the issue, among both businesses and consumers, and of new optimised processes within individual stages of the value chain.

At the same time, greater efforts are needed to spark a far-reaching innovation dynamic. Policymakers are called upon to provide the right framework. This may involve incentive systems and steering and/or price mechanisms along the value chain, so that the most ecologically favourable solu-

tions win through in competition. In order to ensure a successful circular economy, it is necessary also to look beyond Germany and Europe to global supply chains. That is where a large proportion of raw materials extraction, production, but in many cases also end-of-cycle disposal takes place. The relevant countries must be considered part of the material cycles if German and European targets are to be met successfully.

It is therefore necessary to

- continue to lobby at international level for the integration of the circular economy into the nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement;
- drive the implementation of the Berlin Roadmap adopted by the G7;
- work with international partners to establish a network of states and institutions dedicated to making increased use of the potential for emissions reductions harboured by the conservation of resources;
- take regulatory measures to ensure a level playing field for primary and secondary raw materials in Germany and the EU;
- help ensure a level playing field for improved access to sustainable financing possibilities for companies in the circular economy and to improved incentive structures for investments in the circular economy, e.g. via depreciation modalities – these could furthermore increase the competitiveness of German industry and thus the attainable tax revenue in the medium and long term;
- drive the dismantling of market-distorting subsidies and regulatory obstacles which in principle undermine economically profitable circular business models and thus prevent the scaling of the circular economy;
- lobby for an equitably organised global circular economy – this might happen, for instance, through overarching cooperation all along the value chain, from raw materials extraction to product design to the development of appropriate capacities and secondary raw materials markets and additional value creation on the ground;
- orient research funding to harnessing potentials along the waste hierarchy that improve waste avoidance, e.g. circular product service systems;
- support and strengthen digitalisation initiatives in the circular economy to exchange necessary data in order to close material cycles – to this end, consideration is being given to creating regulatory sandboxes in the circular economy, too, in order to promote innovation.

The transition to a circular economy pursues an innovation agenda that combines technical advances, innovative business models and a supportive regulatory market environment. In this context, Germany can build on excellent basic research in many areas. The aim now is to position corresponding innovations on the market and then scale them successfully, this latter being particularly challenging in the ramp-up phase.

What is needed, for example, is meaningful support for innovation transfers, increased cooperation between research and industry, and tailored support for circular innovative start-ups. One key factor here is consistent dovetailing with the digitalisation of value chains.

Collecting the relevant data along circular value chains, for instance via a digital product passport, is a prerequisite for this. It is also important to ensure low-threshold yet high-quality data collection on the participation of less digitalised market players while preserving commercial secrecy.

Given its strong market position in Industry 4.0, Germany has a chance here to establish the subject of Design4Circularity as a defining issue for products, processes and value creation networks. The circular economy will then also contribute to strategic digitalisation and the digital readiness of the German economy. Thus the circular economy and digitalisation can have a positive effect on each other.

2. Measures taken

In recent years, raw materials consumption in Germany has been decoupled from economic value creation. This is demonstrated by the development of indicator 8.1 Raw material input productivity. The average annual increase in total raw materials productivity in the period 2000–2010 of around 1.6% is to be continued up until 2030. The increase from 2010 to 2018 was about 1.0% per year. This shows a relative decoupling of economic growth and raw materials input, but not as much as desired. Palpable changes can be seen in the raw materials group “ores” in particular.

Germany has launched numerous initiatives at national, European and international level to strengthen the circular economy. They are programmatic and regulatory in nature and relate to specific source streams, sectors and product groups.

a) Foundations for a circular bioeconomy

Biogenic raw materials, i.e. sustainable raw materials (agricultural and forestry raw materials of plant origin) and raw materials of animal origin that can be used outside the food sector (foodstuffs and animal feed) as materials or energy are only available to a limited extent in Germany and worldwide

and are already being used largely beyond planetary boundaries. The National Bioeconomy Strategy (NBÖS) therefore aims to establish a bio-based circular economy. According to the German Environment Agency's Resources Report, namely, biomass accounted for more than 15% of Germany's raw materials consumption in 2019 (386 million tonnes).

The bioeconomy has huge potential to contribute to sustainable, competitive and resilient economic management. It can play a part in overcoming global challenges such as food security, climate change and environmental and resource protection.

Through research and innovation, e.g. optimised production processes and the use of by-products, work is ongoing to find ways to use biomass more efficiently. Bio-based products and their residues are integrated into materials cycles and cascades in order to reduce resource consumption and ensure that materials can be used for as long as possible. Where different uses find themselves in competition, food security always has priority.

There is still a great need, particularly in the chemical industry and construction sector, to replace fossil and other raw materials, for example with sustainable raw materials such as wood, natural fibres or mushroom mycelium, or with residues and bio-waste. Waste and residues in particular can in many cases be processed into higher quality materials.

As the natural foundations for biomass production, especially agricultural land, are limited, one key aspect is to use biological resources along the entire value chain efficiently and with care. Attention is also paid to ensuring sustainable production and to preserving and restoring natural habitats, biodiversity and natural carbon sinks.

With the National Bioeconomy Strategy, the German Government has already set forth the framework, principles, strategic and operational goals and areas of action for measures.

b) Reducing food waste

Similarly, with its National Strategy for Food Waste Reduction, the German Government has since 2019 already been pursuing the goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 12.3, and indeed going beyond it: in Germany, food waste is to be halved by 2030, not only in private households and commerce, but along the entire food supply chain, and food losses are to be reduced.

The National Strategy is continuously being updated. To this end, all available options are examined and legislative measures considered. In a participatory process, appropriate approaches were identified and effective measures developed. One target agreement has been concluded with companies

and commercial associations, and one with associations of the away-from-home catering industry. Further measures, in particular for private households and the interfaces between sectors, are planned.

c) Enabling sustainable consumption decisions

It is important that consumers can decide to buy more environmentally and socially sustainable products and services. In 2016, the German Government presented the National Programme for Sustainable Consumption (NPNK), an inter-ministerial scheme intended to take sustainability from niche to mainstream. This programme was revised in 2021 and further measures were added.

These include cutting per-capita GHG emissions by half by 2030, a target confirmed by the Government in the National Circular Economy Strategy adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 4 December 2024. In 2024, the ministries approved the indicators for measuring sustainable consumption devised by the German Environment Agency in collaboration with the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Consumption. A report was compiled on the status of implementation of the now 110 measures of the 2021 National Programme. It said that half of the measures had been implemented, or were well advanced in implementation, so far. In the case of at least 40 measures, however, there were severe obstacles to implementation (for an overview, cf. [German Environment Agency text 92/2024](#), in German).

The challenges for sustainable, secure consumption can also be seen in online commerce. Market monitoring agencies and customs authorities have found that traders often do not adhere to existing environmental, health, consumer protection and product safety standards or import regulations. In order to better enforce the law, particularly in relation to traders and platforms from third states, the German Government is currently drawing up an action plan on e-commerce. The European Commission, too, has taken action: in light of possible violations of the Digital Services Act, it has requested information from the platforms Temu and SHEIN, and on 31 October 2024 opened formal proceedings against Temu. Among other things, it is assessing whether there have been violations in connection with the sale of non-compliant products, addictive designs or problematic recommendations. Moreover, it is vital that the market monitoring agencies of the *Länder* can take firmer action against e-commerce platforms in order to ensure the distribution of safe, non-harmful products.

In order to further develop fair trade standards in partner countries of German development cooperation, Germany participates in the KfW Fairtrade Access Fund, which supports Fairtrade or similarly certified cooperatives in Latin America and Africa through loans. Fair trade organisations

in Germany, too, receive support, for instance via the development policy education funding programme for broad-based information and education on supply chains and the importance of fair trade for fighting global poverty.

Statement from the dialogue group:

“Deliberate consumer decisions can make a decisive contribution to climate action. What is needed above all alongside political measures is the information element: surveys show that with the huge number of quality labels, etc., consumers cannot judge the actual benefit for the environment.”

**Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv),
Jochen Geilenkirchen**

d) Improving waste avoidance

The Government has also enhanced Germany’s leading role in waste avoidance. With the Waste Prevention Programme (AVP) set up by the Federation with the participation of the *Länder* in 2013 and its revision in 2021, programmes have been put in place highlighting the relevance of waste avoidance and pointing to specific measures that stakeholders at various levels can take in order to prevent the generation of waste in the first place. The aim is to decouple economic growth and the impact of waste generation on people and the environment.

The Single-Use Plastics Fund transposes the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive into national law. Specific measures of the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive had already been implemented, including bans on single-use plastics for which there are already environmentally friendly alternatives, or rules on labels telling consumers that products contain plastics, which waste disposal methods must be avoided and what the environmental impact of incorrect disposal would be. The Single-Use Plastics Fund makes manufacturers more responsible for certain single-use plastic products. The aim is to involve manufacturers in the cost of municipal waste disposal of certain single-use plastic products, as these products are frequently discarded in public spaces or casually tossed away.

The legal basis is the Single-Use Plastics Fund Act (EWK-FondsG). Manufacturers of the single-use plastic products in question pay a levy into the Fund each year. The Fund will reimburse public waste disposal authorities for the costs they incur through collection and cleaning activities in public spaces and through awareness-raising measures. Up until now, these costs have been met by the taxpayer. The levy must be paid for the first time in 2025 on the basis of prod-

uct quantities sold in the 2024 calendar year. The Single-Use Plastics Fund is designed to help clean up public spaces and to reduce environmental pollution caused by single-use plastics. Nevertheless, enforcement of existing regulatory law remains another fundamental strand of efforts to reduce the careless disposal of waste in the environment.

e) Batteries: regulated from design to disposal

Batteries are a key technology in being able to achieve the energy transition and climate action targets and at the same time in leveraging new economic potential. It is therefore all the more important that the design of the batteries is oriented to subsequent comprehensive recycling and that the products have as small a carbon footprint as possible, are long-life and safe, and at the end of their cycle can be disposed of correctly in such a way that the raw materials they contain can be reused.

The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning batteries and waste batteries, which entered into force in August 2023, harmonised these aspects across Europe. It regulates, for the first time, the entire life cycle of a battery, from manufacture to disposal. In future, the carbon footprint of electric vehicle batteries and rechargeable industrial batteries is to be declared.

In addition, performance classes and probably also maximum limits on the carbon footprint are going to be introduced for these batteries. From 2031, the Regulation sets forth minimum levels of recycled content for specific substances (e.g. lithium and lead) for electric vehicle batteries, large industrial batteries and starter batteries. Furthermore, it fixes minimum requirements in terms of life cycle and performance of industrial batteries, batteries in light means of transport such as e-bikes and portable batteries of general use. The Regulation also introduces rules on the replaceability and easy removability of portable batteries and LMT batteries. This is intended to make a fundamental contribution towards extending the life cycle. There is also an obligation to make batteries available as spare parts for at least five years. This is an important step to extending appliances’ useful life and strengthening consumers’ rights. The Regulation concerning batteries and waste batteries further stipulates corporate due diligence obligations in a particular way: for the first time, corporate due diligence obligations are to be regulated along the supply chain for a specific product group. In particular, environmental aspects in international raw materials supply chains are to be given considerably more attention than in existing legal instruments in the field of raw materials. Moreover, ambitious collection and recycling targets at EU level are to ensure that waste batteries are collected and recycled in a reliable manner. The collection and recycling targets are to be raised gradually in the years ahead.

The battery passport is the first digital product passport to be introduced at European level. Important information will be collated and made available digitally throughout the life cycle of electric vehicle, industrial and LMT batteries. At international level, Germany is working in the Global Battery Alliance multi-stakeholder initiative for more sustainability and a circular economy along the battery supply chain.

f) Securing the supply of raw materials

In its Raw Materials Strategy, adopted in 2020, the German Government undertook not only to step up exploitation of domestic primary raw materials, but also to increase the role of secondary raw materials in security of supply. In a dialogue with industry, the scientific community and the administration, options for action have been developed in the Recycling Raw Materials dialogue platform since September 2021 with the aim of improving the sustainable and thus also secure supply to German industry of metals and industrial minerals from secondary raw materials. This two-year process involving representatives of the business and scientific communities, the administration and civil society has been concluded, coming up with some 100 options for action from a total of eight sub-working groups. The resulting recommendations for action will also play a part in the National Circular Economy Strategy.

Beyond this, the German Government supported the adoption of the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act (CRM Act), which strengthens Europe's sustainable supply of raw materials and attaches particular significance to the circular economy, including through the increased provision of secondary raw materials.

The raw materials fund set up in October 2024 aims to further the goal of supporting sustainable supply through secondary raw materials. As well as projects in the fields of extraction and processing, the fund can also support recycling projects via KfW financing.

g) Using resources efficiently

In adopting the German Resource Efficiency Programme (ProgRess) in February 2012, Germany was one of the first countries to set forth targets, principles and approaches for the protection of natural resources. The German Government is obliged to report to the German Bundestag every four years on the development of resource efficiency in Germany and to update the Resource Efficiency Programme as necessary. The first revision (ProgRess II) was published on 2 March 2016.

The German Resource Efficiency Programme III was adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 17 June 2020. The overarching goal is sustainable extraction and use of natural resources.

Economic growth is to be decoupled as far as possible from the use of resources, and the related environmental pollution is to be reduced.

Another aim is to strengthen the German economy's resilience and competitiveness and thus to promote stable employment and social cohesion.

Voluntary measures and incentives play an important role here. The Programme outlines measures to increase resource efficiency along the value chain and in each update takes account of current challenges. Thus ProgRess III is the first to address the part played by resource efficiency in achieving the climate targets and to consider the potentials and risks for resource efficiency that come with digitalisation.

h) Promoting a European circular economy

The new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) adopted by the European Commission in March 2020 is one of the pillars of the European Green Deal. The CEAP comprises 35 legislative and non-legislative measures, some of which have already been adopted and some of which are still moving through the legislative process. These include, in addition to the measures mentioned above, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, the Directive on the Europe-wide right to repair, the delegated acts in the framework of EU Taxonomy (including sale of second-hand goods, re-use of textile and shoe products and components in the circular economy), the review of the EU Construction Products Regulation, the proposal for a comprehensive review of the End-of-Life Vehicles Directive, the proposal for an amendment to the Waste Framework Directive in relation to food waste and waste in the textiles sector, and the Directive on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive).

In its Political Guidelines for the 2024–2029 term, the European Commission announced a new Circular Economy Act intended to help to create market demand for secondary materials and a single market for waste, notably in relation to critical raw materials. Commitment to shaping these measures in an ambitious way will help to attain the targets of the German Sustainable Development Strategy.

i) Making use of multilateral cooperation

At international level, too, the priority is to promote the circular economy, not least in the context of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and international environmental agreements such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, in the negotiations on an international and legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution (ongoing negotiations in the Intergovernmental Negotiating

Committee, INC), and in the G7 and G20. The central guideline here is to be the research of the International Resource Panel (IRP), in particular the recently published Global Resources Outlook 2024.

In each case under a German Presidency, the G7 Alliance on Resource Efficiency (2015) and the G20 Resource Efficiency Dialogue (2017) were established as central forums for dialogue on resource efficiency and the circular economy. During Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022, the G7 also adopted the Berlin Roadmap, which is intended to strengthen cooperation within the G7 on the circular economy in the coming years. Moreover, the 2022 G7 Ocean Deal takes up the subject of increasing marine plastic pollution as one of the three prominent planetary crises. Active support must also be given to the G7 Action Plan and G20 activities to combat marine pollution. As one of the largest donors to the World Bank ProBlue fund, Germany is supporting the transition to a sustainable marine economy, with a special focus on avoiding marine litter and on integrated maritime spatial planning.

At the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2) in Nairobi in March 2022, it was agreed to launch negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution (INC negotiations). Germany is working successfully with like-minded states to realise this important, globally coordinated goal to combat plastic pollution. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which is mandated to draw up the future agreement, has met five times to date. In early December 2024, the negotiations, which are due to be concluded in 2025, were postponed. A High Ambition Coalition chaired by Norway and Rwanda is particularly strongly committed to the success of these negotiations; Germany is one of the founding members of the Coalition. The goal is to end environmental plastic pollution by 2040.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“Plastic pollution knows no borders. We need binding international agreements and enhanced cooperation in order to fight plastic pollution worldwide. Germany should assume a leading role in this and lobby for stringent global standards.”

Ocean. Now!

Many of the everyday products we use are not manufactured or disposed of here in Germany. Supply chains are global. Global alliances are needed to promote the circular economy worldwide. The PREVENT Waste Alliance founded by the German Government in 2019 promotes cross-sector cooperation for a global circular economy. With a strong rise in

membership, the wide-ranging expertise of its members and their experience of project development and implementation, the Alliance has grown into a globally recognised international network in the field of the circular economy. Successes and recommendations for action are published, and pilot projects have been implemented in more than 15 countries.

In order to keep materials in global circulation and to retain the value of products, materials and resources for as long as possible, the German Government cooperates closely with its partner countries and supports them in their transformation to a sustainable and just circular economy. Disadvantaged groups are a particular focus. One major priority is not to shift negative environmental impacts and social repercussions to countries of the Global South. Only through strong global partnerships can a real circular economy be established. For this reason, the German Government has announced in the National Circular Economy Strategy its intention to build recycling and technology partnerships (“just circular economy partnerships”).

Furthermore, partner countries are given support to strengthen their digital capacities for the circular economy and to make better use of financing possibilities for the circular economy. Moves to strengthen financing mechanisms that are established in Germany (e.g. extended producer responsibility – EPR) at global level are key.

3. Next steps

a) Shaping the transformation to the circular economy

In order to align the many different initiatives and measures and ensure that they, on the one hand, enable a life and economic activity within planetary boundaries and, on the other, coherently address the various target dimensions of a circular economy – from resource protection and climate action to competitiveness and securing the supply of raw materials and ensuring prosperity – there needs to be a strategic conceptual framework.

b) Implementing the National Circular Economy Strategy

This framework is provided by the National Circular Economy Strategy (NCES), which was adopted by the German Government in early December 2024 and which forms the basis for a structured process for the transition to a circular economy. The NCES is oriented to the principles and key focuses of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP). It is designed as the German Government's framework strategy to tie together existing raw materials strategies, such as the Raw Materials Strategy and the National Bioeconomy Strategy, and to create the conditions for sustainable circular supply chains for Germany. Specifically, the NCES pursues four main strategic aims:

1. Reducing the use of primary raw materials
2. Closing materials cycles
3. Cutting dependence on imported raw materials
4. Preventing waste

It also makes clear the circular economy's contribution to climate action. In essence, therefore, the NCES contains a set of binding, ambitious targets and concrete measures designed to advance the circular economy by 2045. It also envisages a roadmap to support and monitor the implementation process.

The measures anchored in the NCES are intended to improve the market conditions for secondary raw materials in order to substantially increase their share in raw materials utilisation, improve resource efficiency and advance product design oriented to durability, reparability and circularity. This creates the necessary environment for the transformation to be effected in an unbureaucratic, fair and socially equitable way, so that sustainable consumption is and remains affordable for all consumers.

The NCES looks at interplays with the international and EU levels and with the *Länder* and municipalities. The business and scientific communities, civil society and the *Länder* and municipalities are to be involved in implementing the Strategy in order to grow broad-based social participation in and acceptance of the foreseeable processes of comprehensive change. Circular aspects of global supply chains will also be considered and tackled in collaboration with partners.

Mobilising society to see the opportunities presented by the circular economy, as well as the need for it, is vital. Public interest in the topic is growing, but as yet rarely leads to concrete action. So there is a need for better orientation and for appropriate consumer information on how the circular economy can be reasonably and effectively integrated into everyday life. In a similar spirit, the members of the Alliance for Transformation – representatives of the business community, trade unions, the research community, policymakers and civil society – have agreed to be ambitious in driving the realisation of the huge potential of the circular economy within their remit. Research and development plays a special role here in evolving existing processes and methods and finding innovative solutions.

With regard to social participation, the challenge lies in the necessary shift of experience and qualifications. If Germany's economy is more strongly oriented towards the circular economy, certain areas of the traditional linear economy might dwindle in importance, while other, circular aspects become markedly more significant. Support and assistance

must be provided for this transformation and for the necessary training of employees. A sustainable circular economy must develop corresponding education, training and awareness-raising programmes. Education for sustainable development (ESD) plays an essential role in this context.

c) Establishing a right to repair, supporting consumers in making sustainable choices

Product reparability promotes sustainable consumption, so strengthening consumers' right to repair is a major component. Between March 2022 and March 2023, the European Commission presented four proposals for legislation relating to consumer communication and consumption in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: the proposal for a Directive as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and through better information (Empowering Consumers, EmpCo, entered into force on 26 March 2024), the proposal for a Directive on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims (Green Claims Directive, still the subject of negotiations), and the proposal for common rules promoting the repair of goods as a draft for a Right to Repair Directive (in force since 30 July 2024), as well as the draft of a new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (entered into force on 18 July 2024). Attaining the goals pursued by these pieces of legislation, in particular ensuring the transparency and comprehensibility of sustainability labels and countering misleading business practices, is crucial. Product reparability also promotes sustainable consumption, so designing products in such a way that they can be repaired and strengthening consumers' right to repair are major components. Enhanced consumer rights can increase competition for durable products and allow consumers to have faulty goods repaired for longer. At European level, the labelling of products with a reparability index is to be extended to additional suitable products. The first step was a mandatory reparability index on smartphones and tablets.

d) Increasing public-sector leverage

As a role model and market power, the public sector has a special role to play. The German Government has therefore agreed to try to simplify, accelerate, professionalise, digitalise and sustainably shape public procurement procedures. Public procurement and tendering is to be organised in a more economical, socially compatible, environmentally friendly and innovative way and made more binding, without endangering the legal certainty of procurement decisions or making it harder for SMEs to participate. One priority is to strengthen socially just, environmentally compatible and climate-friendly procurement.

With the procurement transformation package adopted by Cabinet on 27 November 2024, the German Government launched the first comprehensive revision since 2015/2016.

The aim of this procurement transformation package and the National Circular Economy Strategy is to strengthen sustainable, climate-friendly procurement. Another measure intended to strengthen environmentally friendly procurement is the review of the General Administrative Regulation on the Procurement of Climate-Friendly Services (AVV Klima). By 2027, the German Government will work to ensure that biodiversity aspects, too, are reflected in the general administrative regulations on public procurement, thus sending important messages to the business community as regards biodiversity-friendly production.

It is necessary to leverage the value creation potential for new technologies, innovations and enhancing competitiveness, not least in the SME sector.

In order to organise the public administration in a climate-neutral manner, all supreme Federal authorities will introduce an environment management system in keeping with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) by 2025. An environment management system is a tool for identifying and using potential for improving an organisation's environmental performance. This touches not only on climate action and biodiversity, but especially the circular economy. By establishing across-the-board, binding environment management systems and ensuring that they are routinely adhered to, the Federal administration will systematically reduce its resource consumption and close materials cycles. This will be a step towards the goal of 5000 locations registered with EMAS in 2030 (indicator 12.2).

e) Seizing the opportunities inherent in digitalisation

Digitalisation is a vital lever for the success of the transition from linear value chains to a circular economy. One key instrument is the digital product passport, which carries information along the whole of a product's life cycle and makes it available to various stakeholders in a form appropriate for the particular target group. Digital product passports and standardised data spaces in the circular economy improve cooperation among relevant actors and enhance product circularity. This expanded product information is intended, among other things, to facilitate repairs and second-life usage, to simplify disassembly and the recovery of valuable resources, and to increase transparency in the supply chain. Consumers also benefit from the availability of data that is of relevance for informed purchase decisions or that can extend the usable life of the product. Digital product passports are formulated in keeping with the principle of streamlined data. The introduction of digital product passports as part of European initiatives serves this purpose. The first product passports will be introduced from 2027, for instance for batteries for electric vehicles. Further product passports will gradually be introduced for other product groups pursuant to the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR).

f) Making sustainable use of the potential of biomass

The limited availability of sustainable biomass contrasts with the sharply increasing demand for it. This means usages in various sectors are in competition, and targets clash (including LULUCF, natural climate action and protection of biodiversity, and food security).

The aim is to use biomass efficiently and in a resource-conserving way in the various user sectors in Germany, especially where there are no other options available for decarbonisation. The decarbonisation requirements and existing biomass potential of these sectors are to be taken into account. The sustainable production and use of biomass is a key element to advance the necessary transformation of the economy, to attain the climate action and biodiversity goals and to implement the energy transition. At the same time, biomass policy is intended to contribute to long-term security of supply and to planning and investment security in this field.

g) Pushing circularity in the construction sector

As a major source of demand for raw materials, the construction sector plays an important role in the transformation to a circular economy. However, buildings are at the same time potential deposits of raw materials that can be reused to replace primary raw materials. For this reason, the German Government will introduce a digital building resource passport to collate all important information about a building and store data for circular construction. This is intended to support resource management and circularity on the basis of available environmental information about the building and its construction materials from the point of view of life cycle. The aim is to introduce a standardised process to document a building's materials inventory, materials footprint and the potential for urban mining and thus to steer construction material flows in a targeted manner.

4. Spillover effects

In order to make genuine contributions to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through the transformation to the circular economy, attention must also be paid to the effects triggered in Germany or the EU or along their supply chains which may have positive or negative impacts on other countries. People and environments in other, low- and middle-income countries are hit disproportionately hard by the negative effects of trade, production and consumption patterns here, and have less protection against them. Internationally, the circular economy can lead to greater social justice, particularly if companies, in the spirit of extended producer responsibility, also assume physical and financial responsibility for the products they put into circulation.

At the same time, however, structural changes in global value chains and their implications for developing countries and emerging economies must not be ignored. As part of a feminist development policy, all people, irrespective of their gender, origins or other personal characteristics, should be able to participate in this process of change. The circular economy in Germany must therefore be planned with an eye to equal access to natural resources for all and to intergenerational justice. To this end, the countries of the Global South must be taken into consideration as equal partners right from the start of the transformation process, and attention should be given to the stages of circular value creation across national borders.

The past few years have seen a slight downward trend in circularity worldwide: the growth in demand for primary resources is still outstripping the dynamics of the development of the circular economy. Thus the fundamental potential of the circular economy to advance climate action is far from being exhausted. For this reason, there needs to be agreement among policymakers, business and society about fundamental directions to be taken, so that domestic branches of industry have the requisite planning security allowing them to hike up their investment in the circular economy. The necessary transformation of the German economy also provides appropriate leverage to shape global value chains.

IV. Sustainable construction and sustainable mobility

The “Sustainable construction and sustainable mobility” area of transformation plays a central role for the reality of people’s lives.

Figure 9: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 4



“Housing” and “mobility” are, after all, two fundamental prerequisites for participation in public life. This area of transformation covers the whole of the built environment as a designed space, its usage, its further development, and the raw materials and materials (e.g. wood, steel, concrete, etc.) used. The way in which cities and municipalities are shaped, with their buildings, structural installations, infrastructures and private and public open spaces, has an influence on the quality of human coexistence, as well as on people’s health and productivity. Structures of all kinds, including transport structures, are the basis for good, stable economic and social development. Constructing, maintaining and operating them releases energy and material flows which contribute to the scarcity of natural resources and to undesired repercussions for the environment. At the same time, buildings and infrastructures are durable goods: when they are being constructed, thought must be given not only to current needs, but also to the benefits for future generations. Planning and investment decisions have consequences for society, business and the environment for many decades to come. Measures must therefore be examined and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in achieving targets on the one hand, and their long-term environmental, sociocultural and economic impacts on the other. The need for action in this area of transformation becomes particularly obvious here:

- over 50% of the world’s population now lives in urban settlements; in Germany, the figure is 75%. Thus it is no coincidence that approximately 70% of the SDGs and indicators have an urban aspect.
- Multiple challenges, such as climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts like Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, and the resulting displacement and migration flows, affect municipalities to a particular degree.
- The “Construction, maintenance and operation of buildings” field of action accounts for approximately 40% of total GHG emissions in Germany (cross-sector view in keeping with the polluter-pays principle) and for a large share of demand for natural resources, including land area and primary raw materials.
- The transport sector is responsible for approximately 20% of total GHG emissions in Germany. Technological advances in the field of mobility have led to a more efficient use of the available energy resources. Simultaneously, however, an increase in distances travelled has pushed up total energy consumption in recent years (rebound effect).⁵

1. Aims

The aim is to develop cities and municipalities that are attractive to live in and are oriented to the common weal, and to establish sustainable mobility.

For the development of cities and municipalities, this means

- undertaking to serve the common good and thus promote social cohesion and to create sustainable mobility concepts, and
- shaping it in a greenhouse gas-neutral and resilient way while preserving and promoting resources and biodiversity.

Only if we approach building, housing, transport and urban development, with all their different utilisation requirements, as an ensemble will we be able to make the necessary contribution towards achieving the SDGs. The availability of suitable, affordable housing and the fundability of suitable infrastructures close to residential areas are fundamental prerequisites for social cohesion and for ensuring quality of life. The Federation has therefore set itself the goal of supporting cities and municipalities in their development with a corresponding framework in the form of legal and financial instruments, platforms for dialogue and further training, and research funding. Towns and cities must become catalysts for the transformation towards sustainable development.

Quote:

“Our struggle for global sustainability will be lost or won in cities.”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2012

At the same time, the construction and building sector causes substantial energy and material flows and thus plays a part in the growing scarcity of primary raw materials and in adverse environmental impacts. The construction and real estate industry in Germany (and worldwide) is currently facing the huge challenge of simultaneously building and developing structures in line with needs and demand, meeting the demand for affordable housing, ending the gridlock in rehabilitation, modernisation and investment, enhancing efficiency through digitalisation and innovation, attaining the climate targets and making existing building stock climate-resilient. This creates enormous potential for reducing GHG emissions. The goal must be for planning, construction and operation to be resource-saving, circular, environmentally compatible,

climate-friendly and climate-smart, but also economically efficient. In order to meet this ambitious goal, it is necessary to

- recognise and maintain the economic and ecological value of the building stock and
- look at a building's entire life cycle and encourage the reuse of materials and components, through measures ranging from components exchanges to improved recycling technologies.

A further aim of this updated Sustainable Development Strategy is to better map soil sealing in order to be able to counter the increasing loss of soil, a non-renewable resource, and its ecosystem services (cf. new [GSDS indicator 15.3 on the degree of soil sealing](#)). At present, around 45% of built-up and transport land in Germany is sealed, e.g. built on, concreted over or tarred.

Equally, it is crucial for social and economic participation and climate action to shape the mobility sector, too, in as environmentally friendly, climate-neutral and accessible a way as possible. It must be affordable for all sections of the population. Furthermore, greenhouse gas, air pollutant and noise emissions must be cut substantially in order to enhance quality of life, resource efficiency and health.

In more densely settled areas, this must be ensured through urban-compatible means, i.e. local public transport systems or shared mobility as far as possible, and, in rural areas, through the intelligent linkage of various transport systems to ensure reliable accessibility. By strengthening ecomobility in urban and semiurban areas, the aim must be to make even individual motorised transport and goods transport greenhouse gas-neutral and sustainable. Alternative drive technologies and, where necessary, renewable fuels will play an important role in this regard.

Access to sustainable transport options must be improved, especially in rural areas. In short, basic mobility affordable for all must be guaranteed.

2. Measures taken

a) Sustainable urban development

Construction activities are influenced via state regulation in the field of construction, incl. land use planning procedures, building regulations and underlying strategic steering instruments in the form of integrated urban development concepts. These should be sustainable. Sustainable urban development

means taking an integrated approach to ecological (consumption of new land, conservation of resources, climate action and climate change mitigation, biological diversity, etc.), social (demographic change, social cohesion, affordable housing, etc.) and economic factors (economic structure, infrastructure, etc.) and applies to cities and municipalities of all sizes. The job of sustainable urban development is to identify possible solutions to specific spatial problems and to elaborate strategies for the long-term development of spatial structures.

Strengthening integrated action

In 2020, at EU member state level, the Ministers responsible for urban development adopted the New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good as a key policy document for the modern development of cities and municipalities in Europe. The Charter provides the framework for a transformation towards sustainability and was a core element of Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As well as highlighting the need to think and act in a more integrated way, the Charter puts the common good front and centre. The three dimensions for action – the just, green and productive city – are linked at neighbourhood, metropolitan and wider functional area level. The content of the New Leipzig Charter is being implemented in Germany through the National Urban Development Policy. Integrated action is key to ease the – inequitably distributed – adverse effects of environmental pollution and climate change on health and to establish universal access to environment-related health resources such as green spaces. The most important instrument for aligning the to some extent contradictory interests here is integrated urban development concepts at municipal level, drawn up in collaboration by various departments.

The Cork 2.0 Declaration “A Better Life in Rural Areas” (2016) and the European Commission’s long-term vision for rural areas (2021) similarly emphasise the importance of integrated territorial development and connected action for Europe’s villages and rural areas.

Environmentally sound and resilient municipalities

The basis for sustainable and environmentally sound urban planning in terms of planning law is provided by the municipalities’ land-use plans and zoning plans, which pursue the strategic objectives of the integrated urban development concepts. At municipal level, climate action and adaptation concepts, municipal heat planning, heat action plans, transport and mobility concepts, and air quality, noise reduction and noise action plans, as well as landscape planning, may also be of relevance. Here, too, there are many possibilities for creating healthy environmental and living conditions for all people in Germany. Integrated urban development concepts which take account of the needs of all people, irrespective of age, gender, level of education or origin, and

municipal sustainable development strategies or overarching framework plans contain concrete measures and are the basis for successful future-proof development at local and regional level. They pull together these different perspectives and feed them into land-use planning. These tried-and-tested instruments must therefore be strengthened and adapted to current circumstances.

Planning in the field of health promotion and prevention can also take greater account of environmental aspects in future. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate change-induced extreme weather events have shown how important resilient and equally adaptive urban development is for being able to respond appropriately to crises and disasters. Within the scope of the Federation-*Länder* programmes for the promotion of urban planning and integrated rural development, as well as in the area of energy-efficient urban redevelopment, substantial positive experience has already been garnered with the implementation of measures to improve urban resilience and climate adaptation on the basis of development concepts.

The promotion of equal health opportunities plays a key role in the further development of urban resilience, as it is directly tied in to aspects of urban sustainability. For socioeconomically vulnerable population groups in towns and cities generally suffer far greater health problems as a result of heat or harmful emissions. In this connection, it is first and foremost the public health services run by the municipalities that play an important function in ensuring social compensation.

Digitalisation, too, provides a host of opportunities for sustainable urban development. By developing and integrating local digital strategies into urban development processes and concepts, resource efficiency can be enhanced, decision-making and participatory processes improved and digital skills expanded both in the business world and in civil society and the cultural sector.

Making cities climate-secure

As a result of climate change and the associated increase in extreme weather events, cities and municipalities must concentrate more on climate change adaptation. This involves ensuring good provision of green spaces in local neighbourhoods and residential areas (including roof and facade greening), connecting green and open spaces and implementing water-sensitive urban development. Nature-based solutions can strengthen social and ecosystem resilience in the face of the climate crisis and at the same time make a contribution to climate action. The funding programme for adaptation of urban and rural areas to climate change supports the municipalities in this endeavour. In order to strengthen own activities and deepen cooperation agreements, a heat protection strategy has been drawn up for the fields of urban

development and construction. Also as part of the preventive adaptation strategy with measurable targets, the aim is to ensure adequate blue-green infrastructure in towns and cities. The Federal Information Centre for Climate Adaptation (ZKA) has proven to be extremely helpful for municipalities in implementing this goal. Improving the availability of quality green spaces (i.e. that promote local biodiversity and are maintained in a nature-based way) that are within walking distance and that fulfil health, social and ecological functions plays an important role both in climate-adapted urban development and in the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Law, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the National Strategy on Biological Diversity 2030. Not enough has been done in this regard in socially deprived areas. In order to further this work, the system of targets and indicators will be correspondingly strengthened as the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) is updated.

Shaping liveable inner cities

Inner cities and town centres are places of identification and as social and cultural centres of the community stand for identity, encounters and cohesion. The future of inner cities lies in being liveable places of encounter, thanks to mixed-use design and attractiveness. In this context, it is vital that the multiple uses – e.g. business, retail, skilled crafts, gastronomy, housing, education, culture, nature and public institutions – are blended sustainably.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“The planning of future-proof concepts for towns or cities must take account of the needs of all people, no matter their age, gender, level of education or origin.”

German Council of Nursing

In addition, there is a need to create publicly usable areas, in whose design residents have had a say, as well as nature-based, climate-secure green-blue spaces and suitable mobility options. To this end, use can be made of existing support from the Urban Development Support Programme “Living Town and City Centres”, the Federal programme on future-proof inner-city areas and centres (ZIZ), and integrated rural development. Tests, successful model projects, municipal dialogue and research support (including the National Urban Development Policy or the research programme “Experimental Housing and Urban Development”) can also be put to use.

Creating equivalent living conditions

Cities and municipalities are closely meshed with their surrounding areas. In line with the principle of sustainable development, the political goal of creating equivalent living conditions must be further strengthened. To this end, traditionally investment-oriented growth and structural policy needs to be backed up with participatory approaches oriented

to the common good. The Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building is therefore launching a new programme to promote strategic regional development concepts in 2024. The “RegioStrat” programme addresses the regional level and builds bridges between formal regional planning and informal regional development. The approaches it promotes to region-specific challenges are tailored to the region in question. These challenges might range from climate adaptation and the energy transition, to migration and housing, and mobility and digitalisation.

Good jobs can provide tangible impetus for local economies and infrastructures and thus improve the quality of life in disadvantaged regions. By relocating Federal authorities and research institutions, new jobs are deliberately being brought to less favoured regions and eastern *Länder*. By 2028, for example, 5000 new jobs are to be created in the coal mining districts affected by structural change (cf. section 18 of the Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas, StStG).

Tackling housing scarcity

The availability of housing that is suitable, accessible and affordable for all, as well as ecologically sound and climate-friendly and of high construction and design quality, is one of the key challenges for social cohesion. To this end, the German Government has undertaken to create more affordable housing. It is therefore working, not least in the Alliance for Affordable Housing, to give an effective boost here. In 2022, the 33 Alliance members adopted a wide range of measures for a construction, investment and innovation campaign entirely geared to housing affordability. These included measures to strengthen publicly funded housing construction, promote climate-friendly and resource-saving construction and speed up planning and approval procedures, along with steps to ensure sustainable building land and land policy, such as the strengthening and further development of municipal land allocation procedures (*Konzeptvergabe*) or the establishment of needs-based municipal and regional land funds by the *Länder* and municipalities.

In addition to a strategic municipal real estate policy, potentials for sustainable land use are to be developed. At the same time, neighbourhoods, solidarity-based communities, cooperatives and municipal housing associations are to be strengthened as public welfare-oriented stakeholders in the housing market.

On 25 September 2023, the German Government presented a comprehensive package intended to provide major, prompt impetus for the stabilisation of the construction and real estate sector and the preservation of jobs. The key elements are measures to accelerate (and digitalise) planning and approval processes, tax incentives, and funding programmes to incentivise additional investment in the construction of affordable and climate-friendly housing. To this effect, a major revision of the Federal Building Code (BauGB), in which, inter

alia, climate action and climate change mitigation, the orientation to the public good, and brownfield and infill development were to be strengthened and additional construction land mobilised, was initiated in the 20th legislative term, but was not completed. Further measures relate to the standardisation of building regulations (Model Building Regulations, MBO), nationwide harmonised type approvals that simplify serial construction, time limits on approval procedures, the digital building application and the introduction of building type E to strengthen innovative capacities in the construction industry.

Enhancing experiments with forms of planning, construction and participation as innovation drivers at municipal level

Experimental approaches can try out innovative ideas, especially those of initiatives and public welfare-oriented stakeholders, and can be transferred to other projects and processes. In order to instigate processes on the ground, the funding programmes (e.g. Urban Development Support Programme, Research for Sustainability [FONA] Strategy) support model projects, regulatory sandboxes and innovative project formats. Thus the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, through the transformation clusters on social innovation for sustainable cities, supports R&D projects that examine socially innovative approaches to, for example, the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, space efficiency and green areas, and draw up blueprints for effective scaling and transfer. Beyond this, the legal framework must be shaped in such a way that experimental and innovative approaches can be moved forward.

Participatory formats are essential elements, not only to create acceptance for the necessary processes of transformation, but also to strengthen participation and thus democracy and its institutions overall. The idea is to elaborate concepts of how the Federation and *Länder* can help the municipalities to ensure continuing professional development, specialist dialogue and training for employees in order to strengthen sustainability in the municipalities. To this end, open-ended consideration was given to establishing a centre of excellence for further and continuing training, also as a knowledge hub for municipal practice. Here, good use can be made of the experience gained and approaches taken by municipal education communities with the aim of improving cooperation and knowledge transfer within the administration – in this context, for example, between the education and urban planning spheres. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research supports municipal education sectors through the ESF Plus programme *Bildungskommunen* (“educational communities”) and through a national network of development agencies and experts.

Limiting new land use and promoting multiple land use

From an increase in land used for settlement and transport infrastructure (new land use) around the turn of the millennium of over 120 hectares per day, land take is to be limited to below 30 hectares per day by 2030. The goal is to attain a circular land economy, i.e. net zero land use, by 2050. Land use currently (2022 figure) stands at an average of 52 hectares per day.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“In the municipalities, this use of land manifests itself in increased competition for the use of space, as in many areas there is hardly any free land left. For example, the creation of green spaces and recreational areas, a necessary and important step in climate change adaptation, collides with the urgently needed expansion of affordable housing construction. However, businesses and forms of urban production also need commercial areas in cities if the “city of short distances” is to be realised as a contribution to climate action and the requisite mobility transition brought to fruition.”

Center for Sustainable Communities

A fair distribution of land quotas consistent with the reduction trajectory of the Sustainable Development Strategy is required for the future development of settlements in all municipalities. Sustainable action therefore demands new approaches and an intelligent management of land. In particular, the priority is to resolve the conflict between providing affordable housing and limiting land use. In addition to priority brownfield and infill development and the creation of compact, mixed-use settlement structures in the sense of the New Leipzig Charter, greater attention must be paid to approaches geared to multiple land use.

Section 2 (2) of the Spatial Planning Act sets forth the principle that spatial planning concepts should in particular give quantified specifications to reduce new land use. This principle must be followed at downstream levels used by the *Länder*. The municipal level has at its disposal further instruments for the management of land use, in the form of building law and nature conservation law.

Perverse legal and fiscal incentives still contained in legislation, funding programmes, etc. must be wound back or removed. Municipal land management should be given increased support in order to identify infill sites, empty properties and properties with repurposing and conversion potential.

b) Sustainable building

There is a particular need to further reduce the environmental footprint of the construction and operation of buildings. To this end, the German Government has launched the following measures:

Minimising greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions in the life cycle of buildings must become a central target, planning and monitoring parameter. The entire life cycle must be taken into account. The life cycle assessment is a suitable method for recording, assessing and influencing the environmental impact of buildings over the entire building life cycle even at such an early stage as the planning of new construction and modernisation projects. The Federation will therefore take steps towards a planning-phase life cycle assessment of variants, the creation of necessary conditions through training measures, and the provision of quality-tested data. The aim is also to create the foundations for quality assurance in life cycle assessment software and to expand supply and demand for low-carbon products, including the introduction of corresponding quality classes. These are preconditions for the introduction of legal requirements to limit greenhouse gas emissions in the life cycle of buildings with reference values for building-related and operational shares.

The indicators for the precise measurability of greenhouse gas emissions in the construction field of action and with regard to the promotion of circular and resource-friendly construction (including primary raw material consumption) are being (further) developed in a user-friendly way, so that they can have greater relevance and a stronger steering effect.

Timetables and phased plans are being developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions towards a greenhouse gas-neutral building stock.

Climate-friendly construction with wood and other renewable raw materials

Timber construction and construction with renewable raw materials, such as insulation materials from paludicultures from rewetted peatlands, can under certain conditions, in comparison to construction methods using non-renewable raw materials, demonstrably contribute significantly to GHG reduction and serve as a carbon sink and lead to negative emissions. The Timber Construction Initiative (HBI) promotes the use of wood and other renewable raw materials in the construction sector, thereby furthering the goals of climate action, resource efficiency and more rapid construction.

Beyond this, the Charter for Wood 2.0 dialogue process supports responsible policy on wood as a resource and thus underlines goals in the fields of timber construction, timber value chains, the circular economy, cascading and sustainable

raw materials supply. The results of this work feed into research, development and knowledge transfer and help to drive construction with wood.

Circular and resource-saving construction

Given the limited availability of resources, the impact of extraction on the climate, the damage done to the environment and the need to avoid waste, moving towards a circular economy in the construction field of action is very important. The aim is not only to close material cycles, but especially to use them more efficiently. Consumption of primary raw materials is to be reduced and buildings' useful life extended through flexibility, adaptability and alternative use potential.

Planning and construction will therefore be geared to the use of circular, low-pollutant construction materials that are as climate-friendly as possible, the use of secondary raw materials, reuse and recycling. Also, the building stock will be regarded as a deposit of raw materials that can be used to meet demand (urban mining). To this end, the German Government will introduce a digital building resource passport to collate all important information about a building and store data for circular construction. This is intended to support resource management and circularity on the basis of available environmental information about the building and its construction materials from the point of view of life cycle.

More intensive use will be made of the potential of new, circular, environmentally friendly materials and multifunctional materials, with greater use of renewable raw materials. The ability of biomass to bind CO₂ and store carbon is particularly valued in decisions on materials.

Energy modernisation

The transformation of the existing building stock plays the decisive role in achieving the goal of greenhouse gas-neutral operation of the building sector by 2045. The greatest potential for reductions can be found in the most energy-inefficient buildings. In order to advance sustainable development in this area, the energy modernisation of the building stock must be accelerated and heat supply systems must become more climate-friendly. With the amendment of the Buildings Energy Act to introduce the 65% renewable standard for heating installation and the Heat Planning Act (both of which entered into force on 1 January 2024), two key regulatory elements were adopted that make a vital contribution to the modernisation and decarbonisation of the building stock and the building heat supply. The Federation also promotes the energy renovation of buildings via Federal Funding for Efficient Buildings (BEG), for which substantial funds have been made available. In order to cushion the requirements associated with the legal provisions, the BEG was again revised to make it more attractive and more tailored to its target audience. Reducing energy consumption through energy-

efficient building use and energy modernisation as well as the use of renewable energies for electricity and heat ensure a climate-neutral building stock. As this process demands a high amount of investment, it is particularly important to shape it in a socially just way and to use instruments in a targeted (and subsidiary) manner.

Systematic maintenance and cyclical modernisation are essential to ensure a long useful life or life cycle of buildings and structural installations. That is why the Federation has supported the energy renovation of municipal facilities. The Federation will also, for example, run campaigns to expand the advisory services on offer when properties change hands.

Climate adaptation

The changes in the climate that have already occurred and that are to be expected are leading to significantly more dramatic and increasingly frequent extreme weather events. Heat, storms, hail and in particular heavy rainfall with localised flooding can cause substantial damage to buildings, sometimes at tremendous financial cost. There is a need for a precautionary risk analysis tailored to the specific location and type of building and for structural adjustments aligned to the findings. The Climate Adaptation Strategy adopted in December 2024 with measurable targets based on the Climate Adaptation Act (KANg) therefore identifies goals and measures for the protection of residential and non-residential buildings. It was developed in particular for the safety of residents in the event of extreme weather events.

Promoting sustainable and affordable housing construction

To meet the growing demand for housing, the German Government has supported climate-friendly new construction with low-interest loan programmes such as Climate-Friendly New Construction (KFN), Climate-Friendly New Construction in the Low-Price Segment (KNN) and Home Ownership for Families. It has also shifted the focus to existing building stock, e.g. reactivating empty properties, socially innovative forms of housing, converting non-residential buildings and adding additional storeys to existing buildings. It has launched programmes such as “Young buys old” and “From commercial to residential” to create affordable housing in the building stock. It has started an initiative to reactivate vacant properties and strengthened serial modular construction with an office and a roundtable at the Bauakademie. New housing construction must be resource-efficient and affordable and must provide quality living conditions and an excellent environment as well as a good social mix. Further aims are to introduce digital building energy certificates with integrated building resource passports and digital building records in the engineering sector.

The Federation as role model

The Federation fulfils its legal function as a model and takes account of goals of attaining climate neutrality by 2045 and making a comprehensive contribution to sustainable development in the construction, conversion and extension of buildings and the creation and maintenance of infrastructure, with use of the sustainable construction assessment system (BNB) being binding. The Federation examines consideration of external climate and environmental costs via a shadow price, in line with information from the German Environment Agency. The *Länder* and municipalities are stepping up their commitment to the goals of sustainable planning, construction and operation and are further expanding their specific initiatives with support from the Federation. In addition, the revised EU Energy Efficiency Directive requires, from the end of 2025, that at least 3% of the total floor area of buildings owned by public bodies is to be renovated each year and transformed into at least nearly zero-energy buildings or zero-emission buildings, or that equivalent energy savings be demonstrated. To monitor implementation, a corresponding database including all public buildings is to be set up.

The Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) is continuing to develop a structure for the greenhouse gas-neutral operation of buildings; the Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA) is making available data for the Federation’s energy and emissions report.

In exercising its role-model function, the Federation will take greater account than hitherto of sustainability in procuring planning and construction services and integrate it into requirements planning and competitions. As part of the reform process regarding the German ordinance regulating the remuneration of architectural and engineering services (HOAI), planning services for sustainability, as well as their remuneration, will be addressed more clearly. One focal point is the formulation of specifications for ecological and socio-cultural quality with appropriate construction costs and defined life cycle costs. In this context, the procedures for integrating sustainability targets into requirements planning described in DIN 18205 will be applied. Invitations to tender for and the realisation of construction and modernisation projects that achieve net greenhouse-gas neutrality when in operation will be tested in pilot projects. Ecologically sound and climate-friendly construction is to be advanced through federal pilot projects, using the German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB) Certificate for Biodiversity-Promoting Exterior Spaces (for new and old buildings) developed in 2023, where appropriate.

Further, the Federation will intensify its efforts to use digital tools for the collation, analysis, processing and dissemination of data, including as the basis for support for sustainability

assessments and thus sustainable decisions over the entire life cycle of buildings. The widespread application of building information modelling (BIM) on the basis of open, manufacturer-neutral standards and interfaces enables the optimised planning of buildings and thus the efficient use of resources, in terms of both construction materials/products and energy. The Federation is setting an example by introducing the BIM method into federal construction projects.

There are also endeavours to draw up principles for a building inventory in order to drive forward climate adaptation in the building sector. Information is to be gleaned in part from energy performance certificate and building resource passport databases.

The German Government has markedly advanced digitalisation in construction and planning. One important element here is the digital building permit application, which *Land Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania* was the lead in rolling out on the basis of the one-for-all principle, and which is now being successfully also being used by the majority of the *Länder*, with support from the federal level.

c) Sustainable mobility

Technological innovations and the further development of drive systems have a crucial role to play in realising sustainable mobility. It is just as important to avoid traffic, for example through proximity-centred local urban design and a municipal transportation development plan geared to compact, polycentric cities (15-minute city). Furthermore, the competition among transport forms should be improved, so that a proportion of freight traffic in the modal split is transferred to railways and waterways and a proportion of passenger transport shifted to the railways. Beyond this, the aim must be to move motorised individual passenger transport as far as possible, particularly in inner-city areas, to other modes of transportation by ensuring attractive local transport systems in cities. This can encourage people willingly to leave their cars at home or enable them to live without a car of their own. Strengthening local public transport as well as pedestrian and cycle traffic, pursuing integrated approaches and introducing intermodal mobility platforms to connect different means of transport, as well as expanding shared mobility and smart traffic systems, are important elements here. In order to create equivalent living conditions, it is also vital to ensure that increases in travel cost do not restrict mobility in rural regions. One suitable way to achieve these goals at municipal and regional level is with the sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) propagated by the European Commission, which consider environmental, economic and social aspects in functional urban areas (a city and its commuting zone) across transport modes and providers. The SUMP define both principles for sustainable mobility and concrete measures.

Providing resource-efficient mobility services, creating alternative drive systems and charging infrastructure

Digital solutions are available to organise mobility in a smart, interconnected, efficient and climate-friendly way. The transformation in drive technologies in all transport sectors is being shaped through progress and openness in electric mobility with battery, hydrogen and fuel cell technology, and through renewable fuels, where these are necessary.

In order to make electric mobility practicable in everyday life all across Germany, we need a nationwide, demand-oriented, user-friendly charging infrastructure available to all users without long detours or long waits. The cost of public charging should be transparent, and payment should be easy.

With the tenders for the *Deutschlandnetz* (Germany Network) on the basis of the Fast Charging Act, the German Government is stepping up and complementing the nationwide expansion of high-power charging (HPC) infrastructure and ensuring basic provision in the regions and along motorways. The more than 1000 locations with around 9000 ultra-fast charging points close remaining “white areas” on the charging map. This means that the nearest fast charging point is just a few minutes away, all over Germany.

The 11,000 or so municipalities in Germany are key actors in expanding the charging infrastructure on the ground. To support them, the National Centre for Charging Infrastructure, on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport, has developed digital tools and principles that are expanded and improved on an ongoing basis.

The forward-looking, reliable expansion of the electricity grid is of fundamental importance so that the grid does not become a bottleneck in the expansion of the charging infrastructure and ultimately in climate action.

Expanding railway infrastructure

The basis for expansion and new construction in the rail network is provided by the Requirement Plan for the Railways, which addresses the bottlenecks expected in the network in the future and creates demand-oriented capacities for all transport on the railways. The targeted expansion of and new construction on the railway network on the basis of the *Deutschlandtakt* target timetable will create demand-oriented capacities for rail passenger and freight transport that can be better planned. As a key strategy for an efficient, reliable and attractive rail network of the future, the *Deutschlandtakt* significantly strengthens rail transport.

Digitalisation is also serving to expand and preserve the rail network. For this reason, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport has already concluded some financing agreements with DB AG in the context of the Digital Rail Germany initiative.

Strengthening local public transport

In order to attain the climate action targets, the aim must be not only to increase efficiency and to switch to alternative drive systems in the transition to a post-fossil, greenhouse gas-neutral mobility, but also to extend the range of environmentally friendly mobility options on offer and to raise the number of passengers using local public transport. In this regard, important foundations have been laid with, for instance, the *Deutschlandticket* as a fare tool and the dynamisation of the regionalisation funds. Mobility is a key element of people's quality of life and at the same time also a major factor for the economy and the location of business. Accessible, affordable mobility services are indispensable prerequisites for liveable cities and municipalities in Germany. That said, the mobility needs of rural areas must be borne in mind and met with innovative, climate-friendly, sustainable services (e.g. expansion of affordable public transport with more flexible services such as on-demand transport). The model project to improve mobility in rural areas picks up on this to create equivalent living conditions with the aim of introducing affordable mobility solutions across wide swaths of the country. The most recent revision of the Passenger Transportation Act (PBefG, section 44) introduced a new form of transportation: on-demand transport integrated into the local public transport system. Corresponding systems have been trialled in model projects in many places and promising systems integrated. The development of intermodal mobility hubs can make it easier to switch between different forms of transport.

The Federation supports the *Länder*, which are responsible for local public transport, with regionalisation funding amounting to over 11 billion euro annually. The annual dynamisation rate from 2023 onwards is 3%. More than 12 million people have subscribed to the *Deutschlandticket* since its introduction. This has attracted over a million new customers to local public transport within a very short space of time. To finance this, the Federation is making available to the *Länder* additional regionalisation funding amounting to 1.5 billion annually in the years 2023–2025.

Strengthening pedestrian and cycle traffic

The German Government is promoting cycling as a means of transportation with the aim of growing Germany into a land of bicycles. Pedestrian and cycle traffic must be treated on the same level as other forms of mobility. Active mobility on foot or bicycle is to be strengthened because it is in the interests of traffic generally, climate action, health and inner-city commerce. The fundamental prerequisite is an objectively and subjectively safe, integrated infrastructure for all parts of the population. The revised Road Traffic Act (StVG) and Road Traffic Regulations (StVO) established climate action and environmental protection, health and regulated urban development as new goals alongside traffic flow and safety. Other important measures include awareness-raising of the advantages of walking, image campaigns for active mobility,

promotion of the “city of short distances” and nationwide mobile internet connectivity, as well as safety and comfort. The Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport is implementing the National Cycling Plan and drawing up a pedestrian traffic strategy to make inner cities more attractive and pedestrian-friendly. It provides comprehensive support for pedestrian and cycle traffic in the form of various support and funding programmes.

Taking account of urban design measures

One important aspect of sustainable mobility is to shape the traffic areas in such a way as to ensure high-quality urban space. Urban design and cityscapes are major factors in subjective well-being and are crucial for quality of life and the attractiveness of a place. In order to successfully implement a well-designed urban concept and its interplay with transport, the municipalities need greater room for manoeuvre to develop a sustainable mobility policy. To this end, the aspect of supporting urban development has been added to section 6 (4a) of the Road Traffic Act.

The European funding measure ERA-NET Urban Accessibility and Connectivity (EN-UAC), too, aims to establish safe, accessible, affordable transport systems for all, with a focus on the needs of various sections of the population, such as people with disabilities. Specifically, the aim is to improve the accessibility and connectivity of urban mobility services. Projects with German participation are looking, among other things, at how to make transitioning between different modes of transport more accessible through mobility hubs and at inclusive, pedestrian-friendly urban planning from which vulnerable groups such as the hard of hearing benefit. According to the information in the status report, the measure runs from 2021 to 2024. This funding measure serves, inter alia, to implement article 20 (personal mobility) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Promoting experimental approaches

The possibilities for promoting experimental approaches at municipal level, including with other stakeholders, are to be expanded. The scaling and transfer of results from small experimental areas to larger regions are to be accelerated by, for example, R&D projects within the scope of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research funding measure for sustainable mobility in regional transformation areas.

3. Next steps

a) Sustainable urban development

Endeavours to prioritise conversion over new construction, brownfield and infill development over greenfield development, and multiple land use are to be intensified, at the same time creating affordable housing for liveable municipalities. New forms of housing in old buildings, the repurposing of

vacant properties for housing and work, and the revitalisation of buildings in rural areas for new working models are approaches to shape reduced resource consumption in collaboration with the community and to enhance acceptance. To this end, proven instruments such as urban development programmes and village development programmes must be further evolved. At municipal level, municipal sustainability management instruments in general must be strengthened.

There is a need for a more intensive discussion between the Federal ministries on the one hand and with the *Länder* and municipalities on the other on the subject of responsibility and transparency when it comes to land take for renewable energy installations, housing, commercial buildings and transport. There needs to be agreement on how the target of reducing land take for settlement and transport infrastructure to less than 30 hectares per day by 2030 is to be achieved.

Experimental projects are helpful in finding new solutions and approaches. These should be supported in the form of model projects and pilot projects. The necessary transfer of innovation and practice must be accelerated through the targeted promotion of implementation-oriented, transdisciplinary research and improved dovetailing of ministry activities. In this context, pressing developments in the field of urban development policy must be considered, and strategies and/or instruments made available, especially in respect of issues such as land policy, the culture of building, gender-equitable urban planning oriented to the common weal, social innovations, heat protection or enhancing resilience, e.g. against the impacts of climate change (particularly through improved urban greening and nature-based building and open space design).

Given the magnitude and simultaneity of these profound challenges, it is vital that the cities and municipalities have the personnel, organisation and financial capacity to act. The Federation is to provide support for continuing training, expert exchange and employee training in coordination with the *Länder* within the bounds of its constitutional financial powers. To this end, consideration was given to establishing a centre of excellence for further and continuing training, also as a knowledge hub for municipal practice. Further, municipalities – particularly those with major financial difficulties and personnel shortages – must be helped to make better use of the funding system, inter alia by developing viable funding management structures in the regions, as the new funding initiative to strengthen the absorption capacity of funds in vulnerable regions, for example, shows.

International cooperation must be enhanced. Exchange in the context of bilateral and global pilot projects and multilateral partnerships (e.g. G7, G20) should be intensified. In this way, urban transformation processes and their sub-processes in the transport and construction sectors can be compared

internationally and the experiences gained by the municipalities in the urban development area of transformation connected up across borders.

b) Sustainable building

Buildings and therefore their inhabitants are affected by the consequences of climate change. The same is true of structural installations and their users. The foundations and tools for climate-adapted planning and construction are therefore being further developed and expanded. This ranges from providing tools for analysing climate change-related risks at specific sites, to the reorientation of standards and regulations from an experience-based approach towards preparing for the future, to increasing the demands made of site analyses and climate-adapted planning. Sustainable building also means integrating ecological aspects into planning and construction.

At the level of buildings and structural installations, the use of natural resources and the environmental impacts should be determined, recorded and communicated in such a way that this information can be better taken into account than hitherto, for example in decisions on rental or purchase, financing and insurance terms, and valuation and risk assessment. The digital building resource passport supports the circularity of building components, building products and building materials.

In the medium term, the aim is to collate the digital building energy certificate, resource passport and other instruments for the communication of environmental information in one comprehensive digital building logbook. Information from energy certificates and resource passports is to be used to improve the national building stock model data. The Federation is drawing up principles for a buildings inventory in order to drive climate adaptation in the building sector. The requirements of the revised EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) are being taken into account right from the start in elaborating these principles.

The Quality Seal Sustainable Building (QNG) is being further developed. Conditions are being put in place for the construction and real estate sector to be able to take account of the goals and principles of sustainable planning, construction and operation when constructing new buildings, working on the building stock and using and operating buildings.

The content (e.g. as regards criteria promoting biodiversity) and organisation of the Federation's Assessment System for Sustainable Building (BNB) are being comprehensively further developed.

c) Sustainable mobility

Work will continue on the solutions already being pursued and described in detail above. Mobility must be greenhouse gas-neutral, efficient and affordable. There should be diverse

sustainable options for the choice of modes of transport and transport routes. Only then will mobility meet the needs of all people in both urban and rural areas, the requirements of the business and industrial sectors, and the rights of future generations and guarantee freedom of choice, social and economic participation, the provision of public services and equivalent living conditions. By supplementing traffic education in schools with mobility education, young people can be made aware of the environmental impact of their mobility patterns and their choices can be determined for the long term. This includes ensuring that children of primary school age learn to ride bicycles safely and are taught in an age-appropriate way how to use public transport. New mobility solutions offer an opportunity for transformation and value creation. Integrated mobility planning, systematic networking of transport operators and a close mesh between individual and public mobility can make a key contribution here.

Sustainable mobility must demonstrate the following qualities:

- Ecological effectiveness through climate neutrality (electric mobility and charging infrastructure, renewable and alternative fuels, e.g. e-fuels, hydrogen), attractiveness of ecomobility (local public transport, cycling and walking) and multimodality in passenger transport
- Economic efficiency through the efficient use of energy, simplicity and digitalisation (user-friendly digital applications) and analogue marketing channels, collation and use of mobility data, innovations and cutting-edge technologies, as well as resilience of the transport infrastructure through measures to adapt to extreme weather and climate change
- Social equality through affordability, including cheap fares on local public transport, shared mobility, and inclusion through measures to ensure accessibility

In order to make transport sustainable, it is necessary to examine how further scope can be created for municipalities and competent authorities to promote sustainable mobility on the basis of the amended Road Traffic Act. Furthermore, climate neutrality in the transport sector can only be achieved with a mix of different mobility providers with greenhouse gas-neutral drive systems. The field of use (inner cities, rural areas, heavy goods transport, etc.) must also be taken into account.

4. Spillover effects

Positive and negative spillover effects resulting from the German and European transformation of urban development, especially transport and construction, for countries in the Global South must be identified and addressed in order to reduce negative spillover effects as much as possible. Negative spillover effects occur, for example, when the demand for fossil raw materials and minerals in the German transport sector leads to harmful effects in mining and processing regions, which are located predominantly in countries of the Global South. Consequences include loss of biodiversity or declining soil quality, greenhouse gas emissions and the pollution or overexploitation of water resources.

Without circular economy approaches and recycling, the switch to environmentally sustainable drive systems in all transport sectors may lead to increasing exports of old, climate-damaging vehicles to developing and emerging countries. On a similar note, the question of what happens to discarded batteries raises new questions. At the same time, if steps are taken to manage the primary raw material requirements for electric mobility and other alternative drive systems appropriately, there may also be a positive economic and social impact.

Positive framework conditions are therefore important, so that there are positive incentives at international level for sustainable urban and transport development.

In addition to avoiding risks caused by the above-mentioned effects, it is important to broaden access to international solution strategies and development cooperation for cities. To this end, funding and other frameworks that enable municipalities to participate in bilateral pilot projects and development cooperation programmes are to be further developed. The municipal level (or its associations and networks) should regularly be considered as a dialogue partner in multilateral cooperation, e.g. the G7 and G20, especially in the policy fields of relevance to it. The G7 Ministers' Meeting on Sustainable Urban Development, held for the first time under the German Presidency in 2022, must be consolidated and the multilateral dialogue intensified.

At the same time, spillover effects from other countries, where a positive environment for sustainable urban development has so far been lacking, must be looked at. The development of national urban development policies and municipal development plans can play a part here in making cities sustainable and thus liveable.

V. Sustainable agricultural and food systems

Sustainable agricultural and food systems comprise farming, food production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture managed in a way that lays the foundations for providing healthy food in sufficient quantity while protecting the environment, the climate and animals in line with the One Health approach.

At the same time, it must be economically viable for farmers to operate in these circumstances. Farming, food production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture must also be diversified and, where possible, involve strong local value-added structures not least in rural areas.

Figure 10: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 5



1. Aims

In the area of transformation “Sustainable agricultural and food systems”, the German Government highlights ways in which these systems can be made resilient and fit for the future.

It looks at challenges, goals and problem-solving measures along the value chain.

Definition of “agricultural and food systems”

This term describes the complex interrelationships and dependencies between the ways in which agricultural raw materials are produced and processed and food

items and other agri-based goods are transported and ultimately handled and consumed. It aligns with the integrated approach followed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and supported by the German Government.

Agricultural and food systems are facing enormous challenges. Climate change, biodiversity loss, soil degradation and erosion, water shortages, changing precipitation patterns, growing pollution and high resource consumption are endangering the natural resources that we depend on, and thus also threatening food security. In order to find long-term solutions for these challenges, a global transformation of agricultural and food systems is needed. Germany stands by its international responsibility to help global partners with this transformation towards sustainability, bolstering resilience, health and justice as well as the conservation of natural resources.

The ways in which we produce and consume food can do a great deal to help solve many crises – or to exacerbate them. Unsustainable agricultural and food systems hinder socio-economic development potential and can lead to political instability.

Unbiased research that looks at all methods and technologies is essential for development and innovation and lays the foundation for designing and successfully establishing sustainable, knowledge-based agricultural and food systems.

Youth Strategy

The German Government believes it is very important to involve young people in the transformation process. The next generation is essential for the future of the resources that we depend on, not least as participants in the production and consumption of our food. Young people must therefore be consulted as part of the political process.

Under the umbrella of the German Government’s Youth Strategy, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture has developed a binding policy for strengthening consultative youth participation and is implementing this in its work. Formats are used that allow young people’s positions to be seen and heard.

These include a two-day youth political forum (*Jugend-politisches Forum*) organised by the Food Ministry in 2023 and 2024 and planned again for 2025, as well as the Organic Future Camp that will take place in the summer of 2025 on the margins of the Organic Field Days.

Demands voiced during the public participation process:

“Promoting health must also mean promoting youth work that involves sport and exercise, because youth obesity is a growing problem. At the same time, more must be done to indicate and regulate the presence of sugar in highly processed foods (limiting advertising for sweets, taxing sugar, improving labelling)”

German Federal Youth Council

Demands voiced at the Food Ministry’s youth political forum in 2024

In order to support the practical implementation of climate measures, participants demanded a system of remuneration/compensation for farmers providing services of general interest.

In order to promote biodiversity, practitioners in particular suggested local and regional cooperation arrangements with funding for basic and further training.

In order to support sustainable consumption, a VAT exemption was demanded for organic products.

In order to reduce food waste, it was proposed that retailers be banned from disposing of food and required to donate it after the best-before date is reached.

In order to support farmers in implementing the EU’s common agricultural policy (CAP), a more practicable approach was suggested (standardising and simplifying the application and documentation).

Securing the lasting basis for healthy, adequate and sustainable food and access to it

The international community has set itself the goal of ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition around the world by 2030. We are deeply concerned to see that we are moving further and further away from this goal. Realising the human right to adequate food worldwide therefore remains one of our most urgent tasks.

b) Protecting the environment and climate

Natural resources such as soil, water, air and a stable climate, along with biodiversity, are the lifeblood of the farming, food, forestry and fisheries sectors. Sustainable and responsible stewardship of these resources is essential, not least in order to ensure the future production of high-quality food.

Unsustainable agriculture can, among other things, lead to the overuse, erosion and compaction of soils, to the contamination of waters and groundwater with fertilisers and pesticides, and to particulate matter emissions, plastic pollution and biodiversity loss. Agriculture is responsible for around 9% of Germany’s greenhouse gas emissions. It is indirectly linked to another 7% emitted from drained moorland, which is generally used for agricultural purposes.

However, agriculture is also impacted by climate change and must be made more resilient to its effects.

The frequency, duration and intensity of extreme weather such as heatwaves, droughts and heavy rain will increase as a result of climate change. These events become more severe as more greenhouse gases are emitted that heat the climate. It is therefore essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, there is a growing need to adapt to the effects of climate change as it continues to progress. Nature-based landscape hydrology enhances natural water retention and helps to cope with extreme events and prevent water shortages, among other things.

Adapting agriculture to be needs-oriented and sustainable can also have a positive impact on the environment. For example, it supports agricultural biodiversity and can mitigate the effects of extreme weather events.

Agriculture can and must be part of the solution when it comes to climate action, too, because sustainable land use can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as organic carbon in agricultural land (via humus build-up) and in landscape elements (trees, hedges, copses in agroforestry systems). Both of these processes also help to adapt agriculture to climate change and make the entire landscape more resilient to its effects.

Nutrition stand at the Sustainability Forum – key concerns:

At the nutrition workshop held as part of the Sustainability Forum, the most frequently cited demands were:

- “Regionality”, referring to locally or regionally produced goods, should be more precisely defined and communicated in marketing; procurement law should be amended accordingly.
- To accompany meal provision in schools and daycare centres, parents should receive more information about healthy eating and avoiding food waste.

- More land should be made available for producing sustainable food items.
- Greater use should be made of fiscal options for promoting more sustainable consumption (“sugar tax”, reducing VAT on climate-friendly products).
- Hospitals should serve food that supports healing and recovery.

c) Preserving forests and making them climate-resilient

The forests that cover 32% of Germany’s territory are indispensable for climate action. They are a major habitat for numerous animal and plant species, and ensure healthy air and clean water as well as protecting the soil. They are the source of around 735,000 livelihoods and an important public space for exercise, recreation and leisure. The wood that they provide is a valuable, renewable raw material.

This wide range of benefits means that Germany’s forests and sustainable forestry make a significant contribution to achieving the SDGs. As forests come under pressure from climate change, it is urgently necessary to take action so that they can continue providing their important ecosystem services. This must in particular include targeted forest conversion to ensure biodiverse and climate-resilient forests with largely site-indigenous tree species. Forest owners must be supported so that they are able to conserve forest ecosystems, develop them to be climate-resilient and nature-based, and carry out conversion, afforestation and reforestation where necessary. Conserving forests and increasing forest cover benefits humans and nature.

Sustainable forest stewardship and management depends on the committed efforts of all forest owners and the associations that they belong to. These efforts must be bolstered by a comprehensive, multi-faceted and attractive range of forestry services offered both by public institutions (state forestry operations and administrations, chambers of agriculture) and by private businesses in fair competition with one another.

d) Improving the economic situation of farmers and strengthening local value chains

Securing farmers’ income

As primary producers, farmers are at the beginning of the value chain and often have relatively little negotiating power. The German Government therefore aims to strengthen their position. In concrete terms it is reviewing how, in addition

to market-based considerations, farmers can also receive adequate and differentiated remuneration for providing public goods that benefit society as a whole (and do not have a market price). Remuneration for the provision of extra-statutory services of general interest for the protection of the environment, the climate and nature will help to ensure fair income progression as well as enabling the necessary investment in more sustainable modes of production.

Local value chains

Local value chains offer opportunities for sustainability in several respects: for climate action, for local and regional income structures in agriculture, and for establishing and maintaining processing structures in rural areas. Furthermore, surveys show that consumers, too, would like to see transparent, local and sustainable food production. And not least in light of crisis-related problems in global supply chains, locally produced food as one element in diversified production structures can make an important contribution to more resilient and future-proof agricultural and food systems.

Rural areas

Rural areas are natural, cultural and living spaces as well as places to do business; they form the basis of our supply of food and renewable raw materials and contribute to energy production. Cultivated and natural landscapes provide numerous ecosystem services: the provision and production of food, energy and building materials; climate regulation; water retention and flood protection; and the filtering of pollutants from the air and water. Rural areas thus play a key role in providing basic necessities. Furthermore, they are key to the preservation of our cultivated landscapes and also important for recreation and tourism. Rural regions, both coastal and inland, shape our country. Quality of life and public services are essential in order to preserve rural areas as places where people live and work.

Rural areas face considerable challenges. Creating equal living standards and sustainably developing rural areas remain core political goals, not least in light of the multiple ongoing crises and the transformation needed for climate action and the energy transition. Particular consideration must therefore be given to the small, decentralised structures of rural businesses, municipalities and civil society. Tourism is a highly profitable sector in Germany and is especially significant for rural, underdeveloped areas. In order to maintain and enhance its beneficial impact on local economies, tourism must be guided by sustainability, including by the targets set in the areas of climate action and adaptation as well as biodiversity and resource conservation. This must also be taken into account in the process of developing the National Tourism Strategy.

2. Measures taken

a) Climate action and adaptation

Climate action

A series of measures were adopted as part of the Climate Action Programme 2030 to bring about emissions reductions, including in agricultural and food systems. Some of these measures were then consolidated and reinforced in the Climate Action Programme 2023. In the area of farming and food production, the focus is on the following:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in livestock farming (humane and environmentally sound methods, adherence to stocking density limits, feed optimisation)
- Improving fertiliser management and reducing excess nitrogen
- Increasing energy generation from farmyard manure
- Expanding organic farming
- Promoting the cultivation and use of legumes as part of the Protein Crop Strategy
- Increasing energy efficiency in farming and horticulture and promoting alternative drive technologies
- Promoting a sustainable and, in particular, healthy diet and reducing food waste
- Ensuring sustainable food chains (e.g. deforestation-free supply chains)

Furthermore, the role that natural ecosystems play as carbon stores and sinks should be enhanced (LULUCF sector – land use, land use change, and forestry). The Federal Action Plan on Nature-Based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity contains relevant measures currently being implemented that are aligned with this goal. They include in particular the following:

- Improving the condition of unused and protected moors (rewilding with a view to restoring typical moorland ecosystems)
- Promoting site-appropriate, wet use of moorland
- Reducing peat usage
- Preserving forests' beneficial effect on the climate and making them adaptable and resilient, in order to increase carbon storage in long-lasting wood products and better account for the substitution effect of wood; better protecting biodiversity, primarily through integrative, nature-based

and climate-resilient forest management, as well as through wilderness areas

- Preserving and sustainably managing forests
- Maintaining and increasing humus and sequestering carbon by maintaining and adding hedges and agroforestry systems
- Promoting nature-based areas within inhabited zones

The implementation of the National Bioeconomy Strategy will also help to make the economy and society increasingly independent of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas.

Adaptation to climate change

Adaptation to climate change is just as important as climate action, and is particularly essential in some cases such as forest conversion or the rewetting of moorland. It is becoming increasingly important to enhance the resilience of our forests and crops as well as of farm animals and in general of farming, forestry and fishery operations. With the Climate Adaptation Law (KAnG) that was passed in July 2024, the German Government has created a binding framework for climate adaptation at federal, *Land* (federal state) and local level. In the same month it then adopted the Climate Adaptation Strategy in order to more precisely define the specific and measurable goals, measures and instruments.

A key challenge of the twenty-first century is to protect and sustainably use water resources. One important factor is the responsible management of water resources along the entire value chain. All relevant parties must be involved and the work of multi-stakeholder initiatives must be supported. Agriculture is impacted by problems with water resources, but as the largest global consumer of water it can also play a pivotal role in sustainably protecting these resources. The German Government's National Water Strategy explores challenges, strategies and measures for all water users with a view to sustainable long-term solutions for climate change adaptation and the protection and use of inland waters and groundwater. In the agricultural sector, it focuses among other things on efforts to help maintain healthy soils that can effectively absorb and store water.

Forests serve as natural carbon sinks and are therefore not only helping us to reach the climate targets but are themselves increasingly affected by the impact of climate change. The last few years in particular have seen Germany's forests lose a great deal of their vitality and stability. The Thünen Institute estimates that around 25% of the country's forests must be converted to become climate-resilient and nature-based in the near future. The funding programme Climate-Adapted Forest Management provides financing and remuneration for additional climate and biodiversity services.

Moreover, forest owners are to be offered further financial incentives for continuing to make their forests more nature-based. Afforestation of new areas is seen as a suitable measure for enhancing the role played by forests as carbon stores and sinks in the long term.

b) Biodiversity

Conserving, restoring and sustainably utilising biodiversity are vital elements in ensuring that a growing global population can be supplied with healthy food in the face of changing climate conditions.

The above-mentioned climate measures also have powerful synergistic effects for preserving biodiversity. This applies, among other things, to moorland and permanent grassland as well as to maintaining and increasing humus, reducing nitrogen losses, cultivating legumes and promoting agroforestry systems. The planned expansion of organic farming will also do a great deal to promote biodiversity. In addition, the German Government is supporting agroecological and other innovative approaches to sustainable agriculture.

Further ideas are set out in the Arable Farming Strategy and Protein Crop Strategy. The future programme for plant protection (*Zukunftsprogramm Pflanzenschutz*) will make another important contribution.

The EU's new common agricultural policy (CAP), launched in 2023, includes greater efforts to promote biodiversity. Among the CAP's specific aims are helping to stop and reverse biodiversity loss, improving ecosystem services and conserving habitats and landscapes. Progress will heavily depend on the green architecture in the member states. Following changes to conditionality at EU level (exemption from the minimum requirement for non-productive land), this primarily means the eco-schemes within the first pillar and the agri-environment-climate measures within the second pillar. The combined effect of the various green architecture measures should lead to a higher overall level of ambition regarding the environment. The implementation of the relevant measures from Germany's CAP Strategy Plan and their effect on biodiversity must be continuously analysed so that the approaches can be adapted if necessary. In one example, the German Bundestag has decided to provide more financing for the eco-schemes from 2026 and to use this financing for two new eco-schemes that will be introduced for grazing in dairy operations and for the purposeful distribution of biodiversity areas. The aim is to enhance biodiversity services as agreed in the 2023–2027 CAP.

Diverse crops, livestock and commercially cultivated tree and bush species with their diverse genetic resources are a cornerstone of climate adaptation, breeding and cultivation, and innovation, and will enable a secure long-term supply of food and raw materials. We must manage these resources,

meaning use them and secure them, in such a way that they remain available for future generations. To this end, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture published the National Strategy on Genetic Resources for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in March 2024.

The National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) has been the German Government's core nature protection strategy since 2007, and is a key instrument for implementing international agreements on conserving and sustainably utilising biodiversity. The updated NBS 2030, adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 18 December 2024, transposed into national law the CBD's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, including ambitious goals and packages of measures.

Extensive use of pastures

Extensively used pastures offer significant potential for storing soil carbon while also doing a great deal to support biodiversity and the production of especially high-quality protein in the form of meat and milk for human consumption. Livestock farming methods that are particularly suitable for realising this potential are, for example, those involving herding or forest grazing.

c) Transforming livestock farming

Livestock farming is fit for the future when it is humane, environmentally sound and climate-friendly and offers farmers the prospect of profitably producing and marketing their products. Animal stocks should be maintained at a level that is suitable for the site and compatible with the aims of climate and water protection as well as emission control (ammonia/methane).

Key pillars in the transformation of livestock farming are

- compulsory state-regulated animal welfare labelling;
- amendments and additions to animal welfare law;
- the federal programme for supporting the transformation of livestock farming (*Bundesprogramm zur Förderung des Umbaus der Tierhaltung*) (construction of livestock housing, support with ongoing additional expenses);
- amendments to building law and permit law.

Supporting the transformation of livestock farming

Farmers who invest in particularly humane and environmentally sound livestock housing, both conversions and new builds, will receive support. These projects will be subsidised (investment aid) and ongoing additional expenses incurred by particularly humane and environmentally sound farming methods will be partially reimbursed. Furthermore, the implementation of legal provisions on pollution and immissions

must be modified to allow for more new and converted livestock housing that improves animal welfare without harming the environment.

Investments in the conversion of livestock housing will have a positive impact on reducing antibiotic usage, among other things. In the long term, this could for example manifest in lower resistance rates against antimicrobial substances and less environmental damage, thus benefiting humans, animals and the environment in line with the One Health approach.

Animal welfare labelling

The German Government promotes a more mindful approach to animal-derived food products through a wide range of informational and educational measures, and through initiatives such as the new compulsory animal welfare labelling. It is an ongoing task to inform consumers, raise awareness and create transparency.

With the Act on Animal Husbandry Labelling (TierHalt-KennzG), which entered into force in August 2023, the German Government is making farmers' efforts visible not least for consumers. The first step involves labelling for fresh, unprocessed pig meat; it will subsequently be expanded to other animals and forms of distribution. The labels provide neutral information about the living conditions of the animals from which the product is derived.

d) Bolstering organic farming

Organic farming is a particularly resource-efficient and environmentally sound form of agriculture. It provides a wide range of services, particularly with regard to biodiversity, water protection and soil fertility as well as climate action and adaptation. Furthermore, organic farming and food production drives innovation across the agrifood industry. Numerous developments have found a broad application beyond the organic sector, for example new techniques for mechanical weeding, mulch seeding and planting machines, mobile chicken coops, progress in cultivating legumes, and alternative methods of plant protection.

The Food Ministry's 2030 Organic Strategy

The 2021 coalition agreement contains the aim of expanding organic farming to cover 30% of Germany's farmland by 2030. To achieve this, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture's Strategy for the Future of Organic Farming was updated to become the 2030 Organic Strategy. This Strategy aims to put in place the necessary conditions along the entire value chain and eliminate current obstacles.

The key elements of its approach are

- better remunerating the services provided by organic farming and food production for society as a whole;
- supporting the sale and processing of organic food items and increasing the share of organic food in away-from-home catering;
- enhancing research, knowledge transfer, data availability and infrastructure for the organic food supply chain;
- developing solutions for bureaucratic challenges.

With a total of 30 measures across six action areas, the 2030 Organic Strategy sets out ways to work with all relevant stakeholders to remove hurdles preventing organic farming and food production and generate new ideas and momentum.

To expand organic farming as intended, the Strategy focuses on the importance of targeted funding schemes that bring about the conditions needed for conventional farms to convert as well as creating incentives. At the same time, demand must be boosted accordingly. These two sets of measures – accompanied by targeted research on organic farming – should lead to a stable market orientation. The Ministry intends to enhance its overall research on the topic, including programme research, with a view to moving towards the 30% goal. Meanwhile, organic farming methods are to be made a feasible option for the Global South.

Accompanying measures to increase organic farming and food production

As well as increasing the share of organic food in away-from-home catering and strengthening local organic value chains, it is also important to implement public information campaigns to increase the impact and visibility of the environmental and general-interest services provided by organic farming. A new legal framework for the use of organic products in away-from-home catering will introduce labelling regulations that are tailored to the needs of this sector. In addition, more organic food is to be served in canteens within the federal administration. The processing of organic products is to be facilitated and expanded through knowledge-sharing.

e) Healthy and sustainable food

The way food is produced, the way we eat and the way food environments are shaped are influential factors in sustainable development.

Food and Nutrition Strategy

With its Food and Nutrition Strategy, the German Government has set itself the goal of creating a healthy environment for nutrition and exercise. It aims to make it easy for everyone in Germany to eat well, meaning healthily and sustainably. This will help to protect the natural assets that we depend on: the environment, the climate and biodiversity.

National Reduction and Innovation Strategy for Sugar, Fats and Salt in Processed Foods

The German Government's National Reduction and Innovation Strategy for Sugar, Fats and Salt in Processed Foods (NRI) sets science-based targets to create the political impetus for swiftly and significantly reducing the amount of sugar, fats and salt in processed foods, making it easier for people to eat healthily.

Data from product monitoring show that the reformulations carried out to date are not yet sufficient to support a balanced diet to the extent needed.

Away-from-home catering

The quality standards for mass catering published by the German Nutrition Society (DGE) and promoted by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture are a key quality assurance instrument, as they support mass caterers in offering health-focused and sustainable meals. The Ministry is working to see these standards implemented nationwide.

The German Government and the *Länder* have set up a system of central advisory bodies known as networking centres (*Vernetzungsstellen*) for school and daycare catering and for old-age nutrition. The Federation supports the networking centres' efforts for high-quality and accessible mass catering in line with the DGE's quality standards.

The National Quality Centre for Nutrition in Daycare Centres and Schools (NQZ) is the key point of contact at federal level for initiatives around good food. It is responsible for quality development and assurance as well as providing information.

The Food Ministry also runs a competition (*Ernährungswende in der Region*) supporting innovative ideas for sustainable and, above all, healthy eating at local and regional level. It targets ideas that are developed and implemented in participative approaches involving a wide range of stakeholders. Another deciding factor is how easily the ideas can be emulated in other parts of the country. As an important sub-category of away-from-home catering, mass catering features heavily in the competition.

Quote from the dialogue process:

"The provision of food and drink in the health sector is part of the economically significant away-from-home catering sector and represents the second-largest market for the food industry, after food retail."

German Council of Nursing

A strong emphasis on organic food in away-from-home catering is an effective way to accelerate the transition towards healthy, sustainable, relatively unprocessed meals and increase demand for seasonal and locally produced organic food. The 2021 Programme of Measures on Sustainability includes the aim of reaching at least 20% organic food in canteens at federal institutions by 2025. As of the summer of 2023, a longer-term goal has also been set in the guidelines for canteens in federal offices (*Richtlinien für Kantinen der Dienststellen des Bundes*): at least 30% organic food by 2030 at the latest.

There are now more options for advice on away-from-home catering, with measures such as *BioBitte* ("organic, please") and *Bio kann jeder* ("organic is for everyone"). Furthermore, the Guidelines on Promoting the Counselling of Away-From-Home Catering Companies on the Increased Use of Organically Farmed Products (RIBE-AHV) have been in place since late 2022, and the Organic Away-From-Home Catering Ordinance (Bio-AHV) on food monitoring and labelling since 2023.

Quote from the dialogue process:

"Away-from-home catering at municipal level can play a major role in strengthening local value chains. The procurement regulations in this area must be simplified. In addition, municipalities should receive support to draw up a food and nutrition strategy and establish a sustainable food system."

Association of German Cities

f) Reducing food waste

Sustainable agricultural and food systems cannot afford high levels of food waste or high losses in the field and during transit and storage. In 2020, around 11 million tonnes of food was discarded in Germany, much of it unnecessarily. The German Government wants to tackle this waste of energy and valuable resources. Reducing food waste eases the pres-

sure on natural resources. As well as protecting the environment and climate, this helps to ensure that adequate, healthy food can be made available outside of Germany, too, without straining the Earth's planetary boundaries. The aim is for all stakeholders to work together to reduce food losses and halve food waste along the entire supply chain in Germany by 2030. The National Strategy for Food Waste Reduction is being updated across all sectors, following a participative process in which measures were tested and targets were set via sector-specific dialogue forums.

As almost 60% of food waste occurs in private households, it must become the norm for individuals to act in a way that protects resources and the climate. With the initiative Too Good For The Bin!, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture raises awareness about this important issue and provides information and tips to help change daily habits.

g) Participation and social mobilisation

Gender equality

Sustainable agricultural and food systems are inextricably linked with gender equality. Greater sustainability requires progress on equality, too. Tackling social issues and promoting nuanced gender perspectives, with solutions that also address the structural causes of inequalities, is one of the cross-cutting tasks concerning all regulatory areas of agricultural and food policy. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture commissioned a study on "The living and working conditions of women on farms in Germany", which was carried out by the Thünen Institute of Farm Economics and the Chair for Rural Sociology at the University of Göttingen. Various stakeholders have since initiated measures for promoting gender equality based on the recommendations made in the study. Further measures are needed to overcome outdated gender roles and allow women better access to leadership positions, farm inheritances and resources.

Demands voiced during the public participation process:

"It is essential for the area of transformation 'Sustainable agricultural and food systems' to address the specific needs of older people."

German National Association of Senior Citizens' Organisations (BAGSO)

With regard to the international dimension of gender equality, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development presented its Feminist Development Policy in March 2023. This Policy aims to guarantee women the same rights and the same access to resources as men. It also seeks to ensure that women are equally represented and involved in

political and economic decision-making processes. In addition, the German Government supports the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (VG-GEWGE) published by the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in international project and committee work as well as in connection with national issues.

Civic engagement and volunteer work

Some 30 million people in Germany are involved in volunteer work. Every volunteer and every joint project makes an important contribution to ensuring that people can live good and happy lives both in the countryside and in towns and cities.

We need an active civil society to help address the societal challenges that accompany the transformation processes of our time. The German Government has introduced numerous measures to strengthen democratic civil society, and in December 2024 adopted a Civic Engagement Policy (*Engagementstrategie des Bundes*) to tackle structural challenges in this area and ensure it is resilient to crises. One important step is to make volunteer work appealing to young people in particular.

h) Fisheries and aquaculture

In view of the challenges faced by the marine environment, inland waters and fish stocks as a result of climate change and nutrient pollution, for example, it is important to make fisheries sustainable and resilient. Since Germany produces less than one-third of the fishery and aquaculture products that it consumes, sustainably managed inland fishing and aquaculture could do a great deal to support access to locally sourced, climate-friendly and healthy food as well as security of supply. Together with its partner countries, the German Government is working to make it easier to harness the potential offered by sustainable and, in particular, ecosystem-friendly aquaculture and mariculture in the future.

3. Next steps

a) Sustainable prospects for developing and emerging countries

Considering and actively incorporating the international dimension is key to having an impact in the transformation area "Sustainable agricultural and food systems". Germany continues to take on responsibility for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at global level, too.

The German Government is committed to providing swift and effective support and transitional assistance in emergencies and crises as part of its humanitarian assistance, in order to prevent hunger and malnutrition and contribute to food

security. Germany is the world's second-largest humanitarian donor and takes a needs-oriented, multi-sectoral approach that provides scope for follow-up work. In the field of development cooperation, too, the German Government is expanding its efforts in order to provide partner countries with long-term support in transforming agricultural and food systems, and to create future prospects and address humanitarian needs before they arise. It attaches particular importance to empowering marginalised groups.

b) Multilateral cooperation

European Union

To secure the EU's supply of food and renewable raw materials in the long term, we must ensure that our agricultural ecosystems are able to continue functioning. Farming in Europe must therefore be environmentally friendly and climate-friendly.

Since the beginning of the new funding period in 2023, the EU's CAP and its implementation in Germany have been making an even greater contribution to the transformation of agricultural and food systems. This process is set to continue. In the future, the CAP must focus more closely still on protecting the environment, the climate, waters, biodiversity and animal welfare, in line with the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Commission's Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Water Framework Directive. This primarily means income-generating remuneration for services of general interest, i.e. services that contribute to the above protection efforts. Examples include crop rotation systems and the conservation of grasslands as well as of landscape features and other elements promoting biodiversity. Further action must be taken to promote grazing, fallowing, flower-rich margins and plots in and around farmland, and climate-friendly methods such as agroforestry systems and paludiculture processes. The principle of "public money for public services" must underpin the CAP. The German Government is advocating for direct payments to be adequately replaced by income-generating remuneration for measurable climate and environmental services, among other things, while maintaining the level playing field between member states.

United Nations, G7/G20

The CFS, with its inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, is the right forum for developing comprehensive solutions and paths of action for global food security and the transformation of agricultural and food systems. The German Government contributes to the CFS' work, provides it with staff and funding, and promotes the implementation of its recommendations and guidelines.

The UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) took place in New York in September 2021. Two of its outcomes, in line with the UN Secretary-General's statement on the need for transformative food systems, were the development of national pathways for transformation and the establishment of Coalitions of Action. The latter are intended to promote international coordination in various fields and contribute to the national pathways. Germany has joined four Coalitions: 1) Zero Hunger Coalition, 2) Agroecology Coalition, 3) School Meals Coalition and 4) Aquatic Blue Food Coalition. The first follow-up summit, the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment, was hosted by the UN Secretary-General together with the FAO and Italy in 2023. The second follow-up, the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake (UNFSS+4), will take place in 2025. Germany supports the UNFSS and its outcomes and follow-up processes, in addition to the Nutrition For Growth (N4G) summit, which is held every four years and aims to fight all forms of malnutrition.

In order to implement the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the German Government is making greater efforts to promote sustainable use of land and resources and dovetail objectives and measures for sustainable and resilient agricultural and food systems.

In addition, it is using G7 and G20 meetings to promote a sustainable transformation of agricultural and food systems with the involvement of partner countries as well as civil society, scientists and industry. At the 2024 Hamburg Sustainability Conference, Germany became the first G20 member to join the newly founded G20 Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty (GAHP). As a member of the GAHP Board of Champions, Germany is particularly focused on school meals.

A rules-based free trade system taking into consideration the SDGs

The world is facing persistent and growing crises exacerbated by wars and conflicts – such as the global food crisis following Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, with its impact on global market prices and supply, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme weather events related to climate change. These crises are a stark reminder of the importance of international agricultural trade and free and well-functioning agricultural markets on the one hand, and local supplier relations and economic processes on the other hand. International agricultural trade is an important field of action for sustainability. The German Government's agricultural trade policy therefore promotes rules-based free markets and supports the effective implementation of international sustainability standards through multilateral and bilateral cooperation and, in individual cases, through

independent measures at local, national or European level in accordance with WTO law. With the aim of swiftly implementing trade agreements, the German Government is guided by its trade policy parameters, the European Commission's trade policy and the new approach to strengthen and more effectively implement environmental, social and human rights protection, including dialogue, mediation and reaction mechanisms. The EU should, together with its member states, offer support and incentives to partner countries with a view to effectively implementing sustainability standards. The German Government also believes it is essential for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to align more closely with the Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

c) Support for partner countries

Germany is the world's second-largest bilateral donor in the field of food security. In 2023, the German Government provided a total of 3.2 billion euro for this purpose. With the Special Initiative "Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems" run by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany helps partner countries to ensure equitable food security with affordable, healthy and varied food. The focus is on sustainable land use by small-scale agricultural production systems, resilient rural development, access to healthy food including for marginalised groups, and access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as a basis for sustainable food security. Support is provided for agroecological and other innovative approaches to bolstering sustainable agriculture. To foreground the principle of agroecology in the implementation of these new approaches, the Economic Cooperation Ministry and the Food and Agriculture Ministry joined the Coalition for Food Systems Transformation through Agroecology (the Agroecology Coalition) in June 2023.

d) Digitalisation

Digitalisation is highly important for the transformation of agriculture and of rural areas. It can contribute to sustainable resource use in the production of food and animal feed, thus reducing negative effects on the environment and climate (including pollution and biodiversity loss), as well as improving animal welfare, promoting organic farming and simplifying agricultural processes. The German Government therefore supports numerous projects for new innovative approaches and products, often involving AI technologies. This includes promoting communication (interoperability) between the technologies used so that different digital applications can work in sync with one another. The German Government also advocates a fair data infrastructure, for example in Gaia-X-based projects (relating to agriculture), in the creation of a common European agricultural data area, in national initiatives for providing public data online, and in the harmonisation of standards at federal and *Land* level. This infrastructure must be designed for interoperability with the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) so that databases man-

aged by NFDI consortiums in similar areas – such as the MaterialDigital platform (PMD), FAIRagro and DataPLANT – can be easily connected.

A data-based transparency system is currently being developed for the entire food value chain. The aim is to provide information on producers' sustainability performance so that consumers can identify sustainably produced foods.

4. Spillover effects

Sustainable supply chains are a key concern for the German Government, in agricultural and food systems as elsewhere.

It is therefore particularly committed to deforestation-free supply chains. Deforestation and forest degradation contribute in many ways to global climate change and to biodiversity loss. Non-sustainable agriculture is the biggest driver of forest destruction worldwide. The FAO estimates that the conversion of forests for agricultural use is responsible for about 90% of global forest destruction.

After previous measures proved insufficient to stop this destruction, the EU adopted the Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR), which entered into force on 29 June 2023. This Regulation states that soy, cattle, palm oil, coffee, cocoa, rubber, wood and some of their derived products may be placed on the market, made available or exported in the EU only if they are not associated with deforestation or forest degradation. Market participants are obliged to carry out due diligence (collecting certain data on the origin of delivered goods; performing risk assessments and, if necessary, risk mitigation). The EUDR will apply to large and medium companies from 30 December 2025 and to micro and small enterprises, with the exception of forestry and timber enterprises, from 30 June 2026. The German Government supports this ambitious Regulation as a necessary contribution to reducing global deforestation.

Another example is the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG, cf. [chapter A.III.3.b](#); [chapter B.I.1.b](#) – Sustainable supply chains; [chapter B.I.2.c](#) – Corporate responsibility for sustainable supply chains). The German Government also supports efforts including the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), the Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil (FONAP) and the Forum for More Sustainable Protein Feed (FONEI), which work to promote the use of sustainably certified raw materials. Certification is based on international sustainability standards.

VI. Pollutant-free environment

It is no longer possible to ignore the existential global threat posed by the effects of pollutants on humans and the environment. The United Nations describes pollution as the third element in a “triple planetary crisis”, alongside climate change and biodiversity loss.

Figure 11: SDGs of particular relevance for TT 6



Contribution from the online dialogue:

“We welcome the fact that a whole sub-chapter of the Strategy is being dedicated to the issue of a pollutant-free environment. This emphasises how seriously we must take global chemical contamination, as a crisis comparable to climate change and biodiversity loss.”

CHEM Trust Europe

Chemical substances have industrial and commercial uses and are also contained in many consumer products. Chemicals are the building blocks for the goods that we use on a daily basis, as well as for high-tech materials needed for a circular and greenhouse gas-neutral economy. They can have major benefits for human health and well-being, for example in the form of medicines or refrigerants. They are also essential for food safety and security (e.g. in fertilisers and pesticides, in food processing and packaging) and have a pivotal role to play in the green and digital transformation, including the energy transition (e.g. in batteries for electric cars, in wind turbine production, in the semiconductor industry).

However, many substances and their derived products and waste products can have dangerous properties that may harm the environment as well as human and animal health. They pose a particular risk when they are used or applied excessively or improperly, or are not suitably disposed of. Substances that

are very persistent, such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), remain in the environment for a long time once they have been released. During her term as interim Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, Joyce Msuya wrote in the foreword to the 2019 Global Chemicals Outlook II: “We cannot live without chemicals. Nor can we live with the consequences of their bad management.”

Quote from the public participation process:

“Chemical diversity, availability and safety are crucial as a foundation for innovating and maintaining the competitiveness of industry, and thus for making Germany and Europe a successful and attractive industrial hub. They are equally essential for a sustainable transformation of the economy and society, the achievement of the EU’s strategic objectives and the success of the Green Deal, for the resilience needed to face crises, and for functioning value chains.”

Statement by the German Chemical Industry Association (VCI)

The pollution crisis cannot be seen as a one-dimensional issue. Chemical substances are present everywhere (ubiquitous), and they are both useful and harmful. Their effects on different environmental media (water, soil, air) and on health vary greatly. So too do the ways in which they enter the environment – often diffusely over very large areas. In many cases, the environmental impact of chemicals requires a European, supraregional and global approach, including with regard to critical loads.

The global trade in chemical substances, materials, products and waste means that the area of transformation “Pollutant-free environment” has a strong international dimension. For one thing, pollutants that are transported via environmental media such as soil, rivers or air do not stop at national borders, and nor does the damage (pollution) that they can cause. Examples include the fish deaths in the river Oder in 2022 and wind-borne particulate matter that travels for hundreds of kilometres. In the same way, products with harmful ingredients do not remain confined to national markets.

Preserving the resources that we depend on as the basis for health, prosperity and sustainable business is a cornerstone of social justice – both now and for future generations. In this context, it is important to remember that the causes and burdens of pollution are unevenly distributed both globally and within countries.

In 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, the international community therefore agreed to significantly reduce the impact of chemicals on humans and the environment. At the UN Rio+10 Conference

in Johannesburg in 2002, participants committed to producing and using chemicals “in ways that lead to the minimisation of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment” by 2020.

Chemical pollution is addressed by a number of the targets relating to individual SDGs, such as target 12.4 on “the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle”, target 6.3 on improving water quality “by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials”, and target 3.9 on reducing deaths “from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination”.

Many other SDGs as well cannot possibly be achieved without measures to reduce the effects of harmful substances on humans and the environment. In addition to all of the environment-related SDGs (6, 13, 14 and 15), the area of transformation “Pollutant-free environment” also concerns some of the social goals (SDGs 3, 4 and 11) and indirectly impacts economic ones (especially SDG 8 “decent work and economic growth”). Finally, SDG 12 (on sustainable consumption and production) is always relevant to the issue of chemical substances and avoiding harmful effects.

Germany has essentially achieved many of the water-related targets set out in the 2030 Agenda. However, it still has some shortcomings, for example in protecting and improving aquatic and water-dependent ecosystems and further reducing chemical pollution. The National Water Strategy aims to tackle these shortcomings. It also highlights ways to reduce Germany’s water footprint and sets out steps needed to improve multilateral structures for more rapid progress towards global water goals, in line with UN Water’s SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. Particularly important in this context is an overarching approach that takes account of the links between the 17 SDGs and upholds the principle of “leaving no one behind”.

The EU Directive on urban wastewater is an important step towards sustainably reducing wastewater pollution.

Protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems such as floodplains, moors and wetlands makes a vital contribution to improving water quality. This serves to implement the goals of the Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Ramsar Convention, as does sustainable water resource management.

The three elements of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – interact with one another in various ways. Many human-produced chemicals are contributing to the decline in biodiversity and damaging human health. In its Global Assessment Report on Biodiver-

sity, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) identified pollution as one of the five major drivers of biodiversity loss.

In addition, the World Bank notes that the global economic cost of human health damage caused by chemicals (e.g. lead poisoning) is significant. Studies show that “novel” substances are already being released on a considerable scale.

Some substances can directly damage the climate (e.g. ozone-depleting substances, fluorinated greenhouse gases).

Meanwhile, developing safe and sustainable substances and production processes and responsibly handling chemical substances, wastewater and waste products can do a great deal to prevent unwanted releases into the environment and atmosphere, thus helping to implement the SDGs enshrined in the 2030 Agenda as well as the targets set out in the Paris Agreement and the 2022 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Annual raw material extraction tripled worldwide in the period from 1970 to 2017 and is continuing to grow. European industry remains dependent on a high throughput of raw materials, which are extracted, processed into products and traded before ultimately ending as waste or emissions. For the transition to a sustainable supply of critical raw materials in particular, it is therefore essential to diversify supply from both primary and secondary sources. The EU’s Critical Raw Materials Act (CRM Act) sets concrete goals in this regard, for example to promote secondary use. As part of this diversification, partner countries should be supported to build up infrastructure for secondary raw materials and ensure sustainable supply chains.

Ultimately, this can only be achieved with source streams that are “clean” and safe for all participants and do not contain any problematic substances. Substances with no adverse properties, and products that can be easily recycled, help to enable material cycles free of harmful elements and generate new secondary raw materials, thereby reducing raw material consumption and detrimental effects on nature.

The above-mentioned factors make it clear that this transformation area is a cross-cutting issue, with connections to almost all of the other transformation areas within the GSDS.

This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the necessary transformation towards sustainability. Unlike the traditional siloed approach, an integrated perspective opens up additional new viewpoints and paths of action – beyond the typical field of legislation on the environment, substances, products and waste. Measures taken in this area should address potential conflicts between different goals and lead to

an appropriate solution. This will do a great deal to enable reliable planning and ensure future economic strength. Focusing on these interactions between different factors can help to drive the sustainable transformation of the economy and boost Germany's standing as a place to do business.

1. Aims

Preserving the boundaries of our planet's resilience

More must be done to rigorously protect humans and the environment from pollution in a way that ensures planetary boundaries are not exceeded while also supporting sustainable and competitive economic activity. This requires preventive action and integrative, fair, cross-border solutions, e.g. for the problem of plastic pollution.

To this end, progress must be made on the transition to safe and sustainable chemicals, materials, production processes and products, which will strengthen Germany's standing and competitiveness as a location for research, innovation and production.

The German Government therefore supports the implementation of integrated measures. For example, it supported the European Commission in achieving the integrative approaches outlined in the European Green Deal to move towards a pollutant-free environment. This includes in particular the implementation of the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, and the circular economy action plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe. There is also a range of legislation, such as the EU Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases, which already includes integrative approaches.

One challenge is to determine where planetary boundaries lie. Given the lack of adequate global emissions data for numerous substances and mixtures, and the complex effects and interactions seen across a vast range of uses for humans and the environment, including the atmosphere, it is almost impossible to determine a benchmark comparable to the 1.5°C pathway for climate action, for example. It is therefore necessary to continue developing innovative methods for describing planetary boundaries based on the knowledge already available and to find suitable indicators.

This requires further independent expertise and further research. In view of the positive impact of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the German Government therefore supports the creation of an independent and transparent intergovernmental science-policy panel on chemicals. The advice provided by this body would be key to bringing about the necessary change of

mindset in the production and handling of chemicals, products and waste at all levels of the value chain, in politics and ultimately also among consumers.

The difficulties in determining planetary boundaries necessitate a precautionary approach that is as effective as possible in addressing the protection of the environment and human health from pollutant release. The transition to safe and sustainable chemicals, materials, production processes and products must be advanced in a way that enhances this protection.

2. Measures taken

Germany has launched and supported numerous initiatives at international, European and national level that help to better detect the effects of harmful substances, identify risk measures and reduce the release of these substances. This includes, among other things, programmatic approaches, improved scientific knowledge and regulatory measures.

a) International measures

In light of the global trade in chemical substances, materials, products and waste, as well as the associated global supply chains and the fact that pollution does not stop at national borders, the aim of preventing pollutants cannot be achieved without efforts at international level. This is particularly clear in the case of air pollution or of antibiotics and the growing levels of antibiotic resistance worldwide. Internationally agreed targets and measures (and the financial instruments behind them) make an important contribution to mitigating the uneven distribution of burdens worldwide and moving towards the goal of greater environmental justice.

The international community has recognised the connection between the environment and human rights. On 8 October 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that establishes the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right. Germany was among those who voted in favour. On 28 July 2022, the UN General Assembly recognised the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in a resolution of its own.

Multilateral agreements and initiatives by international bodies help to uphold this right.

In 2022, with Germany's support, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted "a safe and healthy working environment" as the fifth principle in its Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This decision also strengthens protection against hazardous substances as an integral aspect of decent work.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the focus of a WHO global action plan and of efforts by the G7/G20, among others.

The German Government is actively collaborating on a number of binding environmental agreements and non-binding frameworks concerning the environment, chemicals and waste. Important conventions relating to the release of substances and to their effects include, for example, the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, the Rotterdam Convention on the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Hong Kong Convention on ship recycling.

The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer address the environmental and health impact of chemical substances (effects of UV radiation; climatic changes). The 2016 Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol includes the phase-down (by up to 80%) of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in industrialised countries by 2035 and in the countries of the Global South by 2045. HFCs are used in refrigeration technology and as foams, for example; they are no longer ozone-depleting, but in some cases have very high global warming potential. As the third-largest donor to the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, the German Government has been supporting implementation in the Global South for many years.

Finally, the OECD Programme on Chemical Safety and Biosafety and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) help enable chemical classification and risk assessments under harmonised criteria and verified testing standards worldwide, ensuring reliable classification of substances including industrial chemicals, pesticides, biocides, and human and veterinary medicines in a global market, for both businesses and consumers.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of December 2022 addresses the issue of pollution with reduction goals to be achieved by 2030 under Target 7 of its action-oriented global targets. Target 7 includes, in particular, reducing the risks to global biodiversity from excess nutrients, pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half by 2030 and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.

The Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste (GFC) was adopted in September 2023, at the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5), held in Bonn during Germany’s presidency, by governments and numerous stakeholders from industry, trade unions, the health sector, civil society and academia as well as the relevant UN organ-

isations. The new international framework builds on the goal already agreed at the UN Rio+10 Conference in Johannesburg in 2002 of producing and using chemicals “in ways that lead to the minimisation of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment” by 2020. It was not possible to achieve this goal with the previously established global policy instrument, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The new GFC has updated this goal and contains, among other things, more specific fields of action and measures to achieve it.

New Global Framework on Chemicals

The new Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) applies to all hazardous chemical substances and derived products throughout their life cycles – from production, to use and transfer in the downstream product phase, to the waste phase. It aims in particular to promote the transition to a circular economy through legislative measures, but also contains incentives for innovation to move towards sustainable chemistry. The 28 targets set out in the GFC, to be reached by either 2030 or 2035, are organised within five strategic objectives:

- Legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities are in place for chemicals management.
- Data and information are available.
- Issues of concern are addressed.
- Safer, sustainable alternatives are available and in use throughout product value chains so that risks to human health and the environment are prevented or minimised.
- Increased cooperation in order to integrate different objectives (including creation of a financing instrument) into all policy areas and decision-making processes in support of relevant projects. Germany has contributed 20 million euro to this fund so that it can start its work as soon as possible. Importantly, it is not only governments who are called on to act – the involvement of stakeholders, particularly the chemical industry, is explicitly envisaged.

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) has initiated further processes. Resolutions on nitrogen, specifically on “Sustainable nitrogen management”, were adopted at its fourth and fifth sessions (UNEA-4 and UNEA-5) and progress on these resolutions was reported at UNEA-6 in the spring of 2024.

UNEA-5 also decided in March 2022 that a science-policy panel for chemicals management should be established (Resolution 5/8). The science-policy interface is essential in order for governments to make sound, appropriate and viable decisions in the context of current global crises.

In addition, the German Government supports efforts to bring about an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution in line with UNEA Resolution 5/14.

As part of development cooperation efforts, the German Government is working with partner countries to help improve chemical safety. This is a cross-cutting issue that is supported as a project component in around 40 projects, in areas including textile production, mining, farming, the waste management industry and the circular economy. Global textile production often uses chemicals that pose risks to workers, the environment and consumers. In voluntary multi-stakeholder approaches, the German Government is calling for compliance with sustainable standards and cooperating with partners such as the industry initiative Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC). The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (BNT) and the government-run certification label Green Button urge companies to manage chemicals responsibly. Anyone who wants to award textile products the Green Button must provide suitable evidence at the producer level.

Germany was also the leading donor to the eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with a contribution of 700 million euro. A total of 15% of the GEF-8 funds are earmarked for the category Chemicals and Waste.

As well as contributing expertise and policy efforts to the creation of international conventions, it is important to support developing and emerging countries, which are often particularly affected by pollution – for example because industrialised countries previously outsourced heavily polluting manufacturing processes there. For various reasons, these countries often lack the financial and structural resources to ensure consistent implementation of international regulations. The German Government therefore also contributes financing to help partner countries implement agreements, including through financing instruments under conventions such as the Global Environment Facility.

b) European level

Given the cross-border effects of chemical substances, and not least in the context of the European single market, economic targets cannot be considered in isolation and must be embedded in European solutions. This is and remains the only way to develop effective, comprehensive strategic approaches and measures as a contribution to reducing the release of undesirable substances.

In the EU alone, pollutants are already addressed by around 40 different legal acts with different approaches and aims. The precautionary principle plays a very important role here.

These acts are not limited to legislation directly addressing chemicals, such as the EU Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH Regulation) and the Regulation on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures (CLP Regulation), or special regulations on biocides and pesticides. Legislation on veterinary and human medicines aims not only to protect humans and animals but also to protect the environment from exposure to medicines and their ingredients. Other environmental legislation too (e.g. on protecting waters and seas or controlling air pollution) contains regulations on harmful substances.

This is in addition to regulations on specific products such as cosmetics, toys, foods and electronic devices. Even the Ecodesign Directive 2009/125/EC of 21 October 2009 took into account the use of certain substances in product design. The new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) will in future make it possible to pass on more detailed information on substances of concern in the supply chain and to make substances subject to certain requirements for reuse and recycling.

Other relevant law includes provisions governing waste (e.g. waste management, in particular for hazardous waste, end-of-life vehicles and electrical/electronic waste). Finally, there are also provisions to protect workers from potential harm resulting from the production, use or disposal of substances and materials in the workplace.

The European Green Deal, the new EU growth strategy presented by the Commission in 2019, includes the aims of climate action and adaptation, the protection of intact ecosystems and biodiversity, and “zero-pollution ambition”. This latter aim involves an ambitious, strategic approach, given the wide range of possible regulations and paths of action, to help reduce pollution from all sources, support the transition to a pollutant-free environment and better protect human health and the environment.

It was enshrined in law in Article 2 (2) of the 8th Environmental Action Programme (EAP), which emphasises the integrative approach needed.

As a first step towards realising the zero-pollution ambition, the European Commission adopted the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability – Towards a Toxic-Free Environment (CSS) in October 2020. The CSS aims to better protect citizens and the environment by boosting innovation for safe and sustain-

able chemicals. It also involves enhancing economic resilience and competitiveness in Europe. The Commission has announced a range of measures to achieve this goal. They include in particular a simpler “one substance one assessment” process for risk and hazard assessments for chemicals. Further-reaching consumer protection measures are also planned, e.g. to protect against especially harmful substances in consumer products. A restriction on the use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the EU is currently being prepared. Measures to protect against the most harmful chemicals in consumer products are also being examined. Risk-based restrictions on certain substances always require a thorough, science-based and differentiated approach. New regulations must also take into consideration the availability of alternatives in order to avoid unwanted repercussions.

As a second major step, in 2021, the European Commission adopted the EU Action Plan: Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil – also called the Zero Pollution Action Plan (ZPAP). The ZPAP’s vision for 2050 is a reduction in air, water and soil pollution “to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems”, “thus creating a toxic-free environment”.

Meanwhile, the Commission’s 2020 New Circular Economy Action Plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe includes measures to make secondary raw materials (recyclate) safer.

The Commission has a number of other transformative strategic approaches, in particular the European industrial strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Union Strategic Approach to Pharmaceuticals in the Environment, the Methane Strategy, strategies for medicinal products, the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, the EU Soil Strategy for 2030 and the Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021–2027, which contain targets of their own and will also help to support progress on the above-mentioned aims.

In light of these overarching aims, the German Government has supported a number of pan-European initiatives by the Commission to reduce the release of harmful substances. For example, the CLP Regulation has been expanded to include additional hazard classes. On 17 October 2023, new EU-wide rules came into effect as part of REACH, restricting intentionally added synthetic microplastic particles. This includes particles used as fillers, binders, film-forming agents, abrasives, carriers, stabilisers, filters and opacifiers, for the targeted release of active substances, for encapsulating fragrances, as antifoamers or defoamers, or as blasting agents for industrial surface treatment. These new rules are an important step towards a pollutant-free environment, because after intentionally added microplastics are no longer permitted on the

market, the release of persistent microplastic particles into the environment will be reduced. The restriction will take effect in several stages for different applications so that affected businesses have sufficient time to develop alternatives and switch over their production.

In 2024, the new F-gas Regulation came into force, further restricting the use, production and distribution of fluorinated greenhouse gases (e.g. as refrigerants and propellants) – in some cases even further than the international provisions in the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali Amendment. Some substances in this group have over one thousand times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.

The European Green Deal also includes the European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which entered into force in July 2024. It requires companies to carry out due diligence relating to the environment and human rights along their supply chains. They must identify and address potential and actual adverse human rights and environmental impacts. This covers, among other things, a ban on producing and using certain pollutants. The Farm to Fork Strategy also envisages a 50% reduction in the use and risk of chemical pesticides for agriculture and a 50% reduction in the use of more hazardous pesticides by 2030.

Traffic exhaust emissions are likely to be largely eliminated by the middle of the century thanks to the revised carbon dioxide fleet limits for cars and trucks in the 2023 Green Deal. In addition, brake and tyre abrasion are regulated for the first time by the Euro 7 Regulation. Tyre abrasion accounts for a high proportion of all microplastics released into the environment and is likely to remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. In aviation, the ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation requires a certain proportion of sustainable aviation fuels to be used for refuelling at airports within the EU, which indirectly also reduces particulate emissions from aircraft turbines.

e) National measures

To supplement European measures, the German Government also takes action against harm caused by substances at national level. This action is guided by the principle of a social-ecological market economy as a prerequisite for a high quality of life.

One key field of action is the collection of data on different substances’ effects. With the German Environmental Specimen Bank and the German Environmental Study (GerES) assessing environment-related health risks, including human biomonitoring (HBM), the German Government has effective instruments for regularly investigating the occurrence of pollutants in the environment and people’s bodily fluids. In particular, it reviews whether existing regulations are effective and whether more are needed.

Meanwhile, the introduction of a national poisoning register will improve the advice available to the public in the event of exposure to poisons. Overarching evaluations will also make it possible to detect potential health effects of certain substances and develop suitable risk measures at an earlier stage.

Chemicals or mixtures that interfere with hormones, known as endocrine disruptors, are foreign substances, meaning they do not naturally occur in the body. They can have a negative impact on one or more functions of the hormone system. The German Government has therefore introduced a Five-Point Plan on Protection Against Endocrine Disruptors, which highlights links between regulation, education and research on these substances. It sets out measures and targets to improve protection, with the aim of ensuring that fewer of these substances will be found in humans and the environment in the future. German authorities are also working to have bisphenol A and other similarly concerning bisphenols restricted under REACH.

Growing antibiotic resistance is a global challenge for human and veterinary medicine. At national level, the first German Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy (DART) was launched in 2008; this has since been replaced by DART 2020 and subsequently DART 2030. It focuses on six action areas, notably including infection prevention as well as enhanced surveillance and monitoring and appropriate antibiotic use in human and veterinary medicine. One important goal is to reduce antibiotic use in veterinary medicine, where the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy envisage a 50% reduction in the quantity of antibiotics used for animals by 2030, as against 2018.

The German Government has also incorporated chemical safety considerations into its Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG), which sets out human rights and environmental due diligence obligations for companies in global supply chains. It also requires companies to ensure compliance with certain international chemical conventions. The LkSG is to be updated in line with the new European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (see above).

Finally, the German Government also works to boost consumer awareness and literacy around sustainable consumption, including through its Blue Angel eco-label.

Consumers can easily access verified data on chemical substances via the free smartphone application *Chemie im Alltag* (CiA), meaning “chemistry in everyday life”, which was developed by the German Environment Agency and released in October 2021. It allows users to scan products, especially typical consumer products such as food and cosmetics, in order to access general information about the chemicals that they contain. The German Environment Agency maintains

an “environmental atlas” (*Umweltatlas*) with a section on reactive nitrogen, helping to inform and educate people about the effects of high nitrogen emissions and enable them to adapt their behaviour accordingly.

3. Next steps

a) International measures

There is a global imbalance in rules and regulations on chemical safety, which are much stricter in some places than others. The result is an uneven playing field as well as social inequality.

The provisions of the Basel, Stockholm, Rotterdam and Minamata Conventions are therefore designed for worldwide implementation. The UN’s Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) also explicitly aims at internationally uniform standards for safe chemical use. The German Government will campaign for the new hazard classes in the CLP Regulation, including endocrine disruption, to be incorporated into the GHS as well, to bring about a uniform level of protection and a level playing field.

However, some 100 countries worldwide have not yet implemented these international regulations or currently have no chemicals management processes at all. Low- and middle-income countries in Africa in particular, as well as in South and Central America, lack the resources needed to set up structures and institutions that can establish safe chemicals handling. This means they also lack the necessary information on which substances are on the market, what they are used for, what properties they have – particularly dangerous ones – and how they can be safely handled.

International efforts therefore focus, among other things, on continuing to develop the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) and on putting in place organisational structures, staffing and expertise in developing and emerging countries. The German Government will campaign for long-term financial support for the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol at international level.

The German Government will also work to see greater involvement and accountability on the part of private-sector institutions. Internalising the costs of environmental pollution, i.e. including the resulting environmental and social costs in balance sheets, cannot remain something that falls to the state alone.

Furthermore, the German Government is heavily involved in the working committees set up to operationalise the science-policy panel for chemicals management so that it can begin its work.

Germany is also pursuing improved application and broader implementation of the GHS in order to create a level playing field.

In addition, the German Government will work for a UN General Assembly resolution to establish a regular agenda item for discussion and knowledge-sharing on issues around chemical and waste management, in order to foster more in-depth discussion and thus support coherent goals and decision-making. The German Government accordingly also supports cooperation bringing together different Conventions.

Together with the EU, the German Government will pursue the goal of a globally level playing field by continuing its in-depth technical and political contributions to the various substance-related environmental conventions, campaigning for their regulations to be ambitiously updated, and seeking further support within international political bodies as necessary.

As part of the OECD Programme on Chemical Safety and Biosafety, the German Government continuously contributes to the ongoing processes for harmonising chemical management at international level, thus doing a great deal to help ensure the quality and reliability of globally used substance assessments, for example in the context of pesticide and medicine approval and control. Suitable testing methods are also essential in order to generate reliable data as a basis for assessments and to enable effective oversight of bans and restrictions. Work in this area focuses in particular on standardising test procedures, including methods that do not involve animal testing, and ensuring compliance with the principles of Good Laboratory Practice.

Responsible handling of novel materials is something else that will require increased attention, including from a precautionary point of view. These materials include advanced plastics, specially designed biological nanostructures, and glass and ceramic materials with novel properties, which are used in fields such as energy, mobility and health. Many of these substances were developed with a view to more effective protection of resources, the environment and the climate. However, they can also have certain properties with unintended effects on the environment and not least on the circular economy. It must also be reviewed whether the existing legal regulations are sufficiently prepared for the special properties that different materials of the future may have.

The 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) adopted the Global Methane Pledge (GMP), with ambitious commitments to reduce global methane emissions. The influence of methane on the greenhouse effect is around 27 times stronger than that of carbon dioxide. In preparation for the

COP28 conference two years later, Germany was nominated as a European GMP Champion to act as a trailblazer in global methane management.

COP28 then adopted the Global Cooling Pledge in December 2023 to ambitiously cut global emissions related to cooling. The German Government signed this Pledge together with 61 other states.

The Climate Change Conferences will remain the most important forum for progress on global climate action and implementing the Paris Agreement in the coming years. These steps are essential on the path to achieving the SDGs. Only at the Climate Change Conferences do all countries have a seat at the table, especially those hardest hit by the effects of the climate crisis. For the 2025 conference in Belém, this means that mitigation must move back up the agenda, and the transition away from fossil fuels must be supported by specific measures.

b) European level

The European Green Deal remains the foundation for a sustainable transformation of the national and European economy. As it implements the necessary measures, the German Government will continue to be guided by the principle of the social-ecological market economy. It will campaign for a balanced, coherent European regulatory framework that follows the precautionary principle, sets out effective measures for addressing the risks posed by problematic substances and combating the pollution crisis, and provides suitable solutions for possible conflicts between different targets. The German Government has identified the primary measures that will be used to achieve measurable progress in the different areas of transformation.

With regard to the security of the raw materials supply, it is essential to bolster circular material flows (cf. [chapter B.III](#)). Substances that are problematic for recycling or for products made from recycled material should therefore be avoided from the outset if possible. With a view to sustainable life cycles, the nature of the substances used should thus be considered in the production phase as well as during use and disposal. In addition to safety aspects, other sustainability considerations also play a role in the life cycle of substances or products, and these may overlap or even contradict each other. A shared understanding of the criteria is therefore essential. The German Government supports the development of a European assessment framework for chemicals and materials that are “safe and sustainable by design” (SSbD framework). This is a crucial step towards defining uniform safety and sustainability criteria for the future, and thus towards ensuring coherent assessments across different sectors and value chains. The result will be greater innovation in the design, development, manufacture and use of chemicals and

materials with desirable functions or performance, in a way that contributes to sustainability in the long term. The aim of this process must be to establish appropriate standards for the safety and sustainability of chemicals and materials; the associated risks (of exposure) must be a key consideration in their use. The German Government will examine the above-mentioned criteria and the extent to which criteria for certain areas, such as procurement or state funding as a binding requirement, can be taken into account.

The European Commission's draft for a revision of the general pharmaceutical legislation, presented in April 2023, provides for much more rigorous and widespread environmental risk assessments, including possible risk mitigation measures to protect the environment and public health.

It is essential to continuously take human samples and examine them for harmful substances in order to assess different patterns of effects and interactions, identify possible exposures and causes, and thus lay the groundwork for sound chemicals management. Germany plays a leading role in Europe with its human biomonitoring (HBM) activities. From 2016 to 2022 it coordinated the EU research project European Human Biomonitoring Initiative (HBM4EU), which received up to 50 million euro of funding from the European Commission. The aim of the project was to coordinate the existing HBM activities of 30 participating states, further develop them and ensure they can be utilised. This work is now being continued for seven years by the EU's new Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals (PARC) and supplemented by environmental monitoring and the ongoing development of toxicology test methods.

Quote from the online participation process:

“Exposure to problematic synthetic chemicals has already reached harmful levels for the environment and health. Findings from the European Human Biomonitoring Initiative (HBM4EU) and human biomonitoring studies carried out by the German Environment Agency show, among other things, that urgent action is needed to reduce exposure to substances of concern. [...] Protecting human health and the environment from harmful chemicals and rising pollution requires clear legal provisions that apply the precautionary principle.”
Substances of concern need to be regulated at the source so that they do not enter the environment in the first place.”

Statement by BUND / Friends of the Earth Germany

In order to further reduce air pollution and ensure long-term protection for human health and the environment, the German Government recently produced the second

National Clean Air Programme (NLRP). This serves in particular to implement Directive (EU) 2016/2284 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (NEC Directive), which sets out binding national reduction commitments for all member states for the period from 2020 to 2029 and from 2030, as against 2005 levels.

The soil monitoring law (Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience) presented by the Commission in July 2023 aims to have all soils in the EU in a healthy condition by 2050. Among other things, it proposes Europe-wide guidelines for identifying and addressing contaminated sites. It also includes the measurement of harmful soil contents as part of regular soil monitoring. The German Government is committed to a binding regulation for European soil protection.

c) National measures

The German Government has identified the primary measures that will be used to achieve measurable progress in the different areas of the transformation process. It is pursuing a broad range of efforts that are not limited to individual effects of substance release, but address complex patterns of effects in an overarching approach, including research.

One key area is the practical implementation of international and European initiatives as suitable in the national context.

For example, as part of updates to the National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) 2030, the German Government is working on a contribution to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The NBS 2030 combines all the most important topics for biodiversity protection with new targets under one strategic umbrella and addresses the polluters responsible for the ongoing decline in biodiversity. Several objectives and measures in the latest draft of the NBS 2030 deal with substance release and other negative effects on ecosystems. These include:

- Reducing pesticide use and nutrient surpluses from agriculture
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorus emissions from all sources into all environmental media
- Reducing pollution from environmentally hazardous substances and from plastic entering the environment

Individual indicators will be developed to facilitate progress reviews, and specific measures will be defined in two successive action plans (2024–2027 and 2027–2030).

The National Circular Economy Strategy (NCES), which was adopted in December 2024, aims among other things to make closed material cycles the norm. In this context, removing

pollutants from materials cycles or preventing them from entering is an essential approach for the safety of humans and the environment in a circular economy.

There is a need for cross-sectoral, integrated action and joint action between different policy areas and a wide range of actors to promote local and social environmental justice. One significant example is the integration of sustainability goals at the local level. The WHO's Healthy Cities Network and the Urban Agenda for the EU can be harnessed for this purpose, and the aims of a pollutant-free environment can be pursued via the "triple inner urban development" model (green spaces, mobility and inner urban development).

Science-based policy can only be developed through research and analysis of the causes of environmental pollutants, their paths of distribution and impact, and possible substitutes. Particularly significant in this context are technological and non-technological innovations, which can make important contributions to a pollutant-free environment.

For example, the German Government is supporting the analysis of causes and sources of microplastics in the world's oceans and pollutants from munitions remnants in the North Sea and Baltic Sea. The research programme Wasser: N – Research and Innovation for Sustainability highlights clean water as a key challenge, to be solved by identifying pollutants and pathogens as well as their paths of entry and their effects on the environment and human health. The activities set out in the programme also include developing innovative technologies and strategies for managing risks as well as removing pollutants and in some cases substituting them. Substitution is particularly relevant in the context of the circular economy, in order to ensure that harmful substances do not hinder recycling processes nor remain present in recyclates and material cycles, but are avoided from the outset wherever possible.

The research, development and innovation activities of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research also address the safety and the health and environmental impact of new materials, with the aim of avoiding potential risks to humans and the environment by carrying out well-founded assessments. This ensures that equal consideration is given to protecting health and the environment and to promoting innovation.

The German Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy DART 2030 is currently being supplemented with an action plan that is to be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

4. Spillover effects

Product- and market-related measures in the national and, above all, European context can help to promote German standards at global level. On the other hand, European protection rules and restrictions on the European market may provide an added motivation for companies trading in problematic substances and products to seek sales markets or even production sites outside the EU.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has highlighted the importance of chemical management standards for global trade and has identified significant differences in approaches to chemical management and the level of rigour applied. At the same time, it can be seen that in other industrialised countries as well as in emerging countries, European chemicals legislation serves as a model and there are efforts to establish similar regulatory approaches.

German companies have the innovative power as well as the global market connections needed to take on a trailblazing role in the transformation towards safe and sustainable chemicals, materials, production processes and products worldwide. This puts them in a position to tap new markets and ensure the resilience and future viability of the sectors concerned, in Germany as elsewhere. By setting out to support this aim, policymakers, business and wider society can give domestic branches of industry the confidence they need to plan ahead and invest more in sustainability.

Positive note should be taken of the growing public interest in the issue and of new optimised processes within individual stages of the value chain. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to spark a coherent, overarching innovation dynamic. There must also be higher-level incentive systems and comprehensive steering and coordination mechanisms across all stages of the value chain.

Furthermore, structural changes in global value chains and their implications for developing and emerging countries must not be ignored. Regulations on corporate due diligence (Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act – LkSG) and sustainability reporting (the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive – CSRD) can generate positive effects that can ultimately also help to improve production processes and sustainable products in Germany, across Europe and in third countries.

In order to ensure fair access to natural resources for all, the German Government will take the countries of the Global South into consideration as equal partners and plan out the steps of circular value creation across national borders.

In a globalised market, restrictions on the marketing of substances and products regularly have indirect tax effects, including for third countries importing into the EU. At the same time, export regulations in particular can assist partner countries in the introduction and implementation of sustainable policies and the fight against dumping.

One example of successful global cooperation is the Rotterdam Convention, which is implemented in the EU by the PIC (Prior Informed Consent) Regulation concerning the export and import of hazardous chemicals. Under PIC, cross-border trade in certain hazardous chemicals requires the prior consent of the destination country. This allows exporting countries to assist importing countries in implementing their national restrictions.

Other examples of export regulations that strengthen cooperation with partner countries on tackling undesirable product or material flows include the EU Regulation on shipments of waste, the Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases, and the Ozone Regulation, which prohibit the export of waste electrical and electronic equipment containing climate-damaging or ozone-depleting substances.

Chapter C. Levers

Building on the 2019 Sustainable Development Goals Report, the 2021 German Sustainable Development Strategy highlighted the following five levers that have particular potential to accelerate progress towards the SDGs:

Governance; social mobilisation and participation; funding; research, innovation and digitalisation; and international responsibility and cooperation.

I. Governance

Germany has an internationally recognised system for implementing political goals and decisions relating to sustainable development (sustainability governance). These institutional structures and processes within the German Government, including accompanying bodies, allow it to steer, implement, monitor and evaluate its sustainability policy.

The *Land* level is also included (cf. also [section 1.b.](#) on vertical integration) and mechanisms are provided for the involvement of various stakeholders from civil society and academia (cf. also [chapter C.II.](#) “Social mobilisation and participation”).

The compass for steering sustainability policy is the 2030 Agenda and, building on that, the goals and principles set out in the German Sustainable Development Strategy (cf. [chapter A.I.](#)). Since this Strategy was first adopted in 2002, sustainability governance has been continuously adapted and updated.

1. Institutional structures and processes for sustainability governance

The Federal Chancellery is responsible for the cross-cutting task of overseeing and coordinating German sustainability policy, including the German Sustainable Development Strategy. In view of the fundamental challenges related to

the SDGs, the Strategy is designed to span multiple legislative terms. Sustainability governance must become more impact-oriented in order to meet these challenges.

In line with the principle of ministerial autonomy, the ministries independently manage the areas of German sustainability policy that fall within their respective remits, including financing and implementing them. They also share responsibility for reconciling the three directly connected dimensions of sustainability in their efforts to meet all of the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda.

a) Organisation and institutions at federal level

Minister of State with responsibility for sustainable development

In its decision of 24 August 2022, the Federal Cabinet entrusted Sarah Ryglewski, Member of the German Bundestag and Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor, with responsibility for sustainability policy. She heads the State Secretaries’ Committee on Sustainable Development, on which all ministries are represented. International experts had demanded as long ago as 2009 and 2013, in a peer review conducted by the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), that a Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor be given specific responsibility for sustainability.

State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development

The Committee is the management body for the German Sustainable Development Strategy. Its meetings are attended at permanent state secretary level by representatives of all ministries.

It sees itself as a high-level strategy forum in which core sustainable development issues are discussed and addressed by all German Government ministries with input from external experts. The chairs of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (PBnE) and the RNE regularly attend in order to discuss various agenda items.

The Committee's work on the updated German Sustainable Development Strategy focused on the areas of transformation (cf. [chapter B.](#)) and on the levers (cf. [chapter C.](#)) in German sustainability policy. The areas of transformation and selected levers were each examined by the State Secretaries' Committee in two stages. First, the State Secretaries discussed the topic with experts on the basis of a short background paper. Subsequently, the Committee looked at the proposed decision drawn up by the relevant ministries; a final version was then adopted by the Federal Cabinet. "Transformation reports" were drafted on the six areas of transformation and the lever of international responsibility and cooperation and were adopted by the Cabinet.

In addition to adopting decisions and holding discussions on key sustainability issues, the ministries used the Committee to report on the implementation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy within their respective remits. The ministerial sustainability reports that they were required to draw up served as the basis for this. These reports are published on the website of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (www.deutsche-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie.de, section on sustainability reports, in German):

Seven transformation reports – six areas of transformation, one lever

1. Human well-being and capabilities, social justice (Committee discussion 27 March 2023; Cabinet decision 23 August 2023)
2. Energy transition and climate action (Committee discussion 12 December 2023; Cabinet decision 20 March 2024)
3. Circular economy (Committee discussion 22 May 2023; Cabinet decision 27 March 2024)
4. Sustainable construction and sustainable mobility (Committee discussion 24 July 2023; Cabinet decision 21 August 2024)
5. Sustainable agricultural and food systems (Committee discussion 25 September 2023; Cabinet decision 5 June 2024)
6. Pollutant-free environment (Committee discussion 27 November 2023; Cabinet decision 24 July 2024)
7. International responsibility and cooperation as a lever of transformation (Committee discussion 23 January 2023)

Interministerial cooperation

With a view to modernising government, the coalition agreement for the 20th legislative term provided for the introduction of permanent, agile project teams and innovation units that operate across ministries and authorities and have specific remits. This concept formed the basis for the creation of seven transformation teams (TTs) for the areas of transformation and the lever of international responsibility and cooperation, in the form of temporary interministerial project groups.

Drawing on work and processes that were already ongoing, and with specific areas of emphasis within their areas of transformation, one role of the TTs was to prepare the meetings of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development. They also drafted decisions and reports on the different issues (cf. [chapter B.](#) and [chapter C.I.1.](#)) and supported the implementation of measures. Their members were determined at a Committee meeting on 14 November 2022 (cf. [chapter B.](#)).

The TTs involved the RNE, the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpm2030) and a dialogue group in their work. The RNE and wpm2030 were more closely involved from the beginning of 2024 after they were given the option of joining meetings with the dialogue group.

The TTs' work puts into practice the whole-of-government approach, which sees holistic interministerial efforts as the key to successful transformation. In the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR, p. 48), the TTs were highlighted as an example of good practice for a policy approach aligned with the areas of transformation. The evaluation of the TTs is to pay particular attention to the aspect of making interministerial cooperation more impact-oriented.

Global Sustainable Development Report – Phases of transformation

In the first phase (emergence), new technologies or practices develop out of innovative ideas and research findings. In the second stage (acceleration), successful innovations gain importance and spread exponentially. This ultimately leads to the third and final phase of transformation (stabilisation), a normalisation of the technology or practice. However, the three stages do not follow on from one another automatically. Active management is needed to ensure that transformation processes are successfully completed. Global capacity-building for these processes is therefore essential. This is the only way to mitigate upheavals, strengthen resilience, promote social mobilisation and increase participation.

Independently of the TTs, the regular meetings of the Directors' working group for sustainable development (UAL-AG) offer the opportunity to discuss topics that affect all ministries. Under the Federal Chancellery's leadership, specific decisions are prepared for the State Secretaries' Committee and the ministries inform one another about relevant activities in the field of sustainability.

Recommendation by the Council for Sustainable Development, 13 November 2023 (extract):

"We welcome the expansion of interministerial cooperation within the German Government on the use of TTs."

Council for Sustainable Development

The Federal Environment Ministry leads an interministerial working group (IMA) for the ongoing development of the sustainability indicators, with members from all ministries and the Federal Statistical Office.

Furthermore, all ministries once again appointed Coordinators for Sustainable Development for the 20th legislative term. They ensure that the ministries act in lockstep to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Duties of the Ministry Coordinators for Sustainable Development

- The central contact person for issues relating to sustainable development
- Interdepartmental coordination of the implementation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda in their ministry's policy
- Interdepartmental involvement to ensure that sustainability aspects are taken into account in the legislative and regulatory process (sustainability impact assessment pursuant to Article 44 (1) sentence 4 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries – GGO) and in ministry strategies

It will remain crucial to take an interministerial approach to the challenges of sustainable development and to continue working on forward-looking solutions and support their implementation.

Quote from the dialogue process:

"The Advisory Council would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of efficient and effective interministerial action."

Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development

Against this backdrop, a process was established to look into maintaining the TTs, as well as other cooperative structures, and possibly further specifying their future tasks. This process should be ambitiously continued during the next legislative term.

Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (PBnE)

The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development was set up for the first time in 2004. It has been reconstituted at the start of each legislative term since then.

During the 20th legislative term it was chaired by Helmut Kleebank (Member of the German Bundestag for the SPD). The Parliamentary Advisory Council brings the issue of sustainability into the German Bundestag and uses the stimulus provided by the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for political work in the parliamentary groups, committees and plenary debates in the Bundestag. To this end it organises regular expert discussions that are open to the public. The Council carries out formal examinations of the sustainability impact assessments compiled by the ministries for new bills and, where necessary, calls for corrections and additions by the ministries concerned. It submits its findings to the relevant lead committee in the form of a statement, which this committee must in turn discuss and evaluate in writing. Its statements are used by the relevant lead committees in their own reviews.

The Council's recommendations for its future development were discussed at a plenary debate in the German Bundestag on 19 January 2024. The Council expressed its support for a modification to the Rules of Procedure of the Bundestag so that it can begin work from the beginning of each new legislative term, ideally in parallel to the committees.

German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)

The Council for Sustainable Development advises the German Government on sustainability policy. It acts independently and since 2001 has been appointed every three years by the Federal Chancellor, most recently as of 1 January 2023. It comprises 15 public figures from civil society, the business

community, academia and politics. The members of the Council are appointed for three years at a time, ad personam and not as formal representatives of individual interests or associations.

Since 2023 it has been chaired by Reiner Hoffmann, former chairman of the German Trade Union Confederation. The Deputy Chair is Gunda Röstel, Commercial Director of the utility company Stadtentwässerung Dresden GmbH and an Authorised Representative for GELSENWASSER AG.

The tasks of the Council are in particular to advise the German Government on sustainable development issues, to draw up contributions for updates to the German Sustainable Development Strategy, and to publish opinions on individual topics. It also carries out activities to help raise public awareness and foster a broad dialogue on sustainability (cf. [chapter C.II.2.](#) on Joint Action for Sustainable Development, and below on local authorities / the mayoral dialogue). In addition, it launches initiatives of its own such as the German Sustainability Code and the Local Sustainability Reporting Framework (BNK). The Council is supported by an office in Berlin.

b) Vertical integration: international cooperation, Europe, Länder and local level

International cooperation and Europe

The German Government is committed to multilateral action and multilateral approaches in order to implement the 2030 Agenda in its entirety in Germany, by Germany and alongside international partners.

German foreign policy, and development and environmental cooperation aligned with the 2030 Agenda and its guiding principles of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, contributes significantly to implementing the 2030 Agenda and promoting sustainability at international level. In an increasingly multipolar world order, Germany is also relying more heavily on bilateral partnerships with countries in Asia, Africa, South and Central America and the Middle East.

Given the crucial importance of international cooperation in achieving the SDGs, the German Government has set up a dedicated transformation team for the lever of international responsibility and cooperation (cf. [chapter C.V.](#)).

At a time of fundamental change in the global environment, European cooperation is more indispensable than ever.

Key EU achievements such as peace, freedom and solidarity form a foundation for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable development is one of the aims agreed in the EU treaties:

“The Union [...] shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance. It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.”

Article 3 (3) and (4) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)

The EU aims to play a leading role in implementing the 17 SDGs. Within the EU, Germany works to promote sustainable policymaking and ambitious implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The German Government thus works closely with the administrations of other European states on sustainable development (see also [chapter A.I.](#) and [chapter C.V.](#)). It is also a member of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN).

The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) allows members of the administration as well as subject-matter experts to share information on strategies and measures for sustainable development.

Currently, the ESDN has more than 400 members and partners from over 40 countries.

Its annual conference was held in June 2024 in Brussels as an official event of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, under the title Upgrading Europe: Building Transformative Policies to Reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Germany contributed a presentation titled Germany – Addressing Transformation in the National Sustainable Development Strategy. In September 2024, the Federal Environment Ministry and the ESDN jointly hosted the fourth ESDN Youth Workshop in Berlin. It was attended by 33 young people from 19 European countries.

Länder (federal states)

Within Germany's federal structure, legislative and administrative authority over key aspects of sustainable development rests with the individual *Länder*. The *Länder* therefore play a decisive role in the implementation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda.

The short *Länder* profiles on the German Government's website (www.deutsche-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie.de, in German) provide an overview of the sustainability activities of the *Länder*.

Prominent political issues with relevance for sustainable development are addressed as appropriate at the level of the Federal Chancellor with the Heads of Government of the *Länder*, or by the Head of the Federal Chancellery with the Heads of the State and Senate Chancelleries of the *Länder*.

Declaration by the German Government and the Länder, Berlin, 6 June 2019

“Out of responsibility for a bright future in Germany, Europe and the world, we, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Heads of Government of the *Länder*, are working together to ensure that the guiding principle of sustainable development is consistently applied at the level of the Federation and the *Länder*.

We want to work together to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals in Germany. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a milestone in international cooperation towards creating a world worth living in for everyone. We want to make swift progress in order to master the challenges facing present and future generations, in Germany and – together with our partners – also in Europe and around the world. We firmly believe that this responsibility cannot and must not end at the borders of our country.”

Another forum for expert discussion of current issues is the twice-yearly Federation-*Länder* Exchange on Sustainable Development (BLE NE). Meetings are prepared and led by the *Land* currently holding the chair of the Conference of Minister-Presidents, together with the Federal Chancellery.

The *Länder* are also actively involved in updates to the German Sustainable Development Strategy. In addition to the dialogue conferences (e.g. with *Land* Berlin and in Bremen, cf. [chapter C.II.4.](#)), the *Länder* have taken part in special sessions at working level, provided written opinions and participated in the Sustainability Forum (cf. [chapter C.II.4.](#)). Finally, in September 2024, Minister of State Ryglewski held

a meeting with the Heads of the State Chancelleries. This meeting format is to be continued as a high-level exchange between the Federation and the *Länder*.

The Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies (RENN) were created in 2016 as a network for sustainable action and social transformation with 16 partners from all of the *Länder*. Since then, the four hubs (RENN Nord, West, Mitte and Süd) have made an important contribution to linking up sustainability activities at regional level and ensuring a broad impact. From 2025, their activities will be brought together by the newly founded organisation RENN.

Local level

In a multi-level federal system, each level of government bears a joint responsibility for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda in and with Germany. This requires strong actors at local level, too, because towns and cities, municipalities and districts play a key role in implementing the SDGs.

In local communities, sustainable development must be shown to be viable and capable of reconciling conflicting aims, for example in the areas of education, affordable greenhouse gas-neutral housing, societal cohesion, health-care and other forms of care, equal living standards, mobility and green spaces, and climate change and adaptation. Local communities are also a place where people can see and feel the impact of sustainable solutions firsthand. As a venue for direct democracy, they are more important than ever, because they strengthen people's confidence in the state and allow them to experience societal cohesion up close.

“Around two-thirds of the 17 SDGs primarily depend on what happens in local communities. For a successful transformation at local level, local authority funding requires a complete overhaul. Following the Federal Constitutional Court's ruling on the federal budget, the question of financing the transformation at local level is more pressing than ever. The longer it goes unanswered, the worse things will become.”

Katja Dörner, Mayor of the Federal City of Bonn, member of the Sustainable City dialogue and the Council for Sustainable Development

A total of 80 UNESCO sites, including World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and Geoparks, as well as numerous educational and cultural networks such as UNESCO Associated Schools, stakeholders in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and UNESCO Creative Cities, have been successfully pioneering the strategic and cross-sectoral implementation of the 2030 Agenda for years, and make it possible to experience and shape the transformation at regional and

municipal level. These sites serve as ambassadors for sustainability and as role models for sustainable development; they encourage engagement with global issues such as transformations and climate change, and implement regional solutions based on local experience, knowledge and traditions.

Sustainability strategies are therefore developed not only at federal and *Land* level, but also at municipal level, and must thus be vertically integrated.

In the interest of effective horizontal networking and integration, the annual Sustainable City dialogue organised by the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) brings together 40 mayors once a year to discuss their sustainability initiatives and issue recommendations to the German Government. The Council also supports local authorities in piloting and continuing to develop the Local Sustainability Reporting Framework (BNK). The initiatives launched by the Council, including the Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform ([chapter C.II.3.](#)) and the Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies, aim to bring together sustainability ideas and stakeholders at regional level in order to lend visibility to the wide range of efforts being made to achieve the SDGs in towns and cities as well as in the countryside.

The end goal is to enhance the local implementation of sustainability, beyond existing project funding arrangements, and ensure synergy effects can be harnessed even more effectively. For example, the Federal Environment Ministry is currently examining the possibility of a joint financing scheme for climate adaptation.

The German Government provides an overview of current funding programmes in an interministerial database (www.foerderdatenbank.de, in German). In addition, a review is underway at federal level concerning the implementation of a competence centre / knowledge hub for planners, which would also support local authorities in various ways (e.g. responding to enquiries about funding programmes).

Local authorities, globally connected

Municipal partnerships focusing on the 2030 Agenda's goals and their implementation at local level represent an important channel for sharing knowledge and experience, e.g. relating to climate action and conservation, sustainable urban development, and development cooperation.

Comprehensive federal support for local authorities is also offered by the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) run by Engagement Global on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. For example, its programme on globally sustainable municipalities (Global Nachhaltige Kommune) has been implemented

in 12 *Länder* to date. Around 250 local authorities have already signed the specimen resolution on the 2030 Agenda by the Association of German Cities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and come together to form the Club of 2030 Agenda Municipalities. In addition, there is support for municipal participation in selected international conferences in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Municipal climate partnerships enable regular, structured cooperation between towns, cities, municipalities or districts and a municipality in the Global South in the areas of climate action and adaptation. So far, 88 municipal climate partnerships have already developed joint action programmes on these issues. That is in addition to 22 municipal sustainability partnerships involving strategic interdisciplinary cooperation between municipalities in Germany and the Global South in order to implement the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

Municipal contributions to achieving the SDGs are also made visible at international level, for example through reports known as Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). These have come to play a much more significant role at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in recent years.

Local authorities are a key player in promoting sustainable development. Even after the adoption of the German Sustainable Development Strategy, there should therefore be a review of possibilities for even closer integration of the municipal level with the *Land* and federal level. Outcomes from the online dialogue and from the municipal congress organised by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in June 2024 under the title "Sustainability needs strong municipalities!" (*Nachhaltigkeit braucht starke Kommunen!*) fed into the ongoing development of the GSDS at various points and will continue to do so.

2. Monitoring, evaluation and administrative action

Steering sustainability policy requires not just a solid structure but also binding and measurable objectives, and therefore a regular monitoring and evaluation system.

a) GSDS indicators

The German Sustainable Development Strategy sets out targets that are aligned with the SDGs and in most cases quantified (cf. [Table 2](#)), illustrating in detail how Germany can achieve the SDGs, including by defining indicators to measure progress. These indicators reinforce the binding nature of the goals and also increase transparency, which assists with the political process of steering and adjusting policy. They furthermore serve as a touchstone for sustainability impact assessments in the legislative process (cf. also [chapter C.I.2.b.](#)).

The Federal Statistical Office provides an interactive platform that displays and analyses the progress of these indicators in depth. Progress is also reviewed by the Federal Statistical Office in Indicator Reports every two years. These reports assess whether the targets are likely to be reached based on the current trend and assigns a corresponding symbol to each target.

Meanwhile, the German Government produces Off-Track Indicator Reports every two years on indicators where either progress is off-track (meaning there is a trend in the wrong direction) or there is a gap of more than 20% between current progress and achieving the target, as identified by the statistical assessment; these reports also set out planned corrective measures. They are published (most recently on 24 July 2023) and taken by the State Secretaries' Committee as a basis for adjustments to ensure the targets are reached.

Updates, in particular regarding the social dimension

The latest update to the GSDS included adjustments to the set of indicators used. The social dimension of the Strategy is now given greater prominence with new and enhanced indicators. The indicator system is to be continuously adjusted and enhanced in order to make it more impact-oriented and reflect rapidly changing social realities.

The newly included indicators in this context include in particular:

- Schools with an ESD label (SDG 4)
- Participation in continuing education (SDG 4)
- Average weekly working hours of all mothers and fathers (SDG 5)
- Jobs covered by a collective agreement (SDG 8)
- Consumer debt (SDG 12)

The Federal Statistical Office and the Federal Ministry of Health (Robert Koch Institute) are piloting data collection to explore the connection between social status and health. The aim is to examine whether a new indicator can be developed based on the difference in life expectancy between prosperous regions and those that are socioeconomically less well-off.

In order to better map the link between social origin and education, an adjustment to the newly introduced indicators 4.3.a and 4.3.b is under review; indicator 4.3.a focuses on a more nuanced exploration of participation in further training and its effects on mobility in study careers, while 4.3.b focuses on optimising the identification and measurement of risk factors. Before the next update of the German

Sustainable Development Strategy, there will be a review of how the parental leave indicator can better reflect parental divisions of labour.

However, the social dimension is also affected by other existing and new targets and indicators in the GSDS, via their impact on human well-being, prosperity and fulfilment – and in some cases indirectly by way of the state of, or access to, nature and the environment. Examples include clean air, clean water, fertile soil, a stable climate, intact nature and nearby green spaces.

Council for Sustainable Development recommendations for updates to the German Sustainable Development Strategy's system of targets and indicators, 13 February 2024, p. 8:

“In the Council's view, it is particularly necessary for Germany to ensure additional investments in infrastructure transformation, especially from the perspective of climate change, digitalisation and demographic change. The Council therefore believes that this aspect should be included in the indicators and targets relating to public debt (indicator field 8.2).”

Council for Sustainable Development

Some existing indicators were also adjusted in order to take account of changes in external circumstances and data availability or to increase their usefulness (cf. [Table 2](#)). For example, the previous input indicator 3.3, “Germany's contribution to global pandemic prevention and response”, with the aim of increasing expenditure and commitments substantially from 2019 to 2030, has been replaced by a new output indicator 3.3. The aim of the previous indicator continues to apply. Germany's contribution as measured by the previous indicator 3.3 was 300.5 million euro in 2019 and 452.8 million in 2022, in addition to 1224.9 million for the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The online indicator platform provided by the Federal Statistical Office continues to report on the previous indicator 3.3. The new indicator 3.3 will continue to be adjusted until the next GSDS update.

By that time there will also be a review of indicator 8.6, “Voluntary sustainability reporting by companies according to the German Sustainability Code (DNK)”, in the context of a possible update of regulations on corporate due diligence obligations. The consumer debt indicator 12.4 will be revised in the same timeframe with regard to its target of preventing individual over-indebtedness. For future updates, it will also be necessary to review whether issues around wealth distribution should be integrated.

A further point to be reviewed for subsequent updates to the indicator system is how procurement to cover the needs of the Bundeswehr can in the future be excluded from calculations of the increase targeted by indicator 12.3.a. Indicator 13.1.b must be adjusted after 2025 in the light of the new global financing target (cf. pp. 53 and 57).

In order to keep the set of indicators manageable – including as a basis for regulatory impact assessments – care was taken to limit the increase in the total number of indicators.

The public participation process generated important momentum and ideas for the revision of the indicator system. Some proposals from the consultation process were incorporated into this GSDS update, for example addressing sustainable and globally responsible business practices, financial crime and international gender equality. Other valuable suggestions could not be implemented in the short time available. These include in particular improved mapping in the areas of public safety, inclusion and a pollutant-free environment. They will be taken into account in future amendments to the GSDS's system of targets and indicators.

These future amendments will also involve a revision of the methodology behind the selection of targets and indicators, including the possibility of internal differentiation. Targets and indicators can then be modified or newly added by way of an amendment decision by the State Secretaries' Committee and implemented by the Federal Statistical Office on its online GSDS platform.

b) Sustainability in legislation

The German Government reviews all draft legislation and ordinances to assess their impact on sustainable development.

“It must be shown whether the impact of the draft legislation is consistent with sustainable development, and in particular what will be its long-term impact.”

Section 44 (1) sentence 4 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (GGO) and, for draft ordinances, section 62 (2) of the GGO

Since a decision by the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development on 14 November 2022⁶, the German Government has taken the SDGs into account at an early stage when drafting legislation and legal ordinances, and as a recommendation in strategies and programmes. Possible conflicts between different goals must also be taken into account, as well as possible effects on third countries.

The aim is to develop sustainability impact assessments as an important means of establishing coherent policies on sustainability, and as an opportunity to institute systematic solutions in this regard.

In concrete terms, this means that the SDGs as well as the national targets and principles set out in the German Sustainable Development Strategy are to be taken into account from the outset in every step of the conception and development of laws and ordinances. This means

- identifying which SDGs are significantly affected by draft legislation and how its aims relate to progress towards the SDGs, from the beginning of the drafting process,
- developing new legislation in such a way that its expected impact is conducive to achieving the SDGs, and
- taking a joined-up approach to the SDGs that accounts for interactions between them, including relevant conflicts during implementation, possible negative effects of the draft legislation on progress towards individual SDGs (both nationally and, if relevant, internationally) and the resulting conclusions.

An evaluation of the German Government's draft legislation initiated by the Federal Ministry of Justice in November 2023 shows that sustainability impact assessments relating to new legislation are carried out at interministerial level. On the basis of the evaluation's findings and suggestions for improvement, the ministries are now called upon to continue advancing their efforts to bolster sustainability considerations in the legislative process. The Justice Ministry offers training on the subject as well as an exchange of best practice for all ministries. It has also produced a virtual working guide and a collection of best practice examples and incorporated these materials into the e-legislation process. Draft legislation and other texts produced by the German Government now contain references to the SDGs and associated targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, usually in the covering note under the heading “Problem and objective” and frequently in the general section of the explanatory notes.

Sustainability impact assessments in the legislative process are carried out by the ministry with lead responsibility for the legislation in question. This ministry liaises with other affected ministries. A web-based assessment tool (eNAP) supports the ministries in their work.

⁶ www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Themen/Nav_Ministerium/2022_Empfehlungen_Nachhaltigkeitsziele.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

Example: Draft of a Second Law Amending the Federal Climate Change Act (KSG)

A. Problem and objective and explanatory notes

A. I. Objectives of and need for these regulations

This draft legislation comes in a context of uncertainty around the timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals contained in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 25 September 2015 titled Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is intended in particular to support progress towards SDG 13, “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. In the interest of a joined-up approach to the SDGs, it is also intended to support the timely implementation of target 16.6, “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”.

Electronic sustainability impact assessments

A web-based assessment tool, known by the German acronym eNAP (www.enap.bund.de), exists to support sustainability impact assessments. Work on adapting the tool to the content of the 2021 GSDS and ensuring it meets accessibility requirements was completed in May 2022. In addition, eNAP has been designed so that conflicting objectives can and should be reported. The principal change, however, is that eNAP is now incorporated into the electronic legislative system on German Government networks. This allows the sustainability impact assessments to be linked with other regulatory impact assessment issues.

Great importance is placed on taking sustainability into account in legislation, and this process is being continuously refined and optimised.

c) Sustainable administration

The guiding principle of sustainable development must also be followed in administrative activities. The public sector serves as a role model and its activities have a relevant impact on the three dimensions of sustainable development.

A modern, interdisciplinary and agile administration that can make complex, strategic, integrated and forward-looking decisions with greater public involvement helps to ensure that SDGs can be implemented effectively and efficiently. This requires capacity-building and learning from examples of good practice at federal, *Land* and municipal level. Meanwhile, existing structures must be continuously developed and adapted to changes. This must involve reviewing how the indicator system can be linked even more effectively to the

targets set out in the GSDS, taking into consideration experiences gained from the process of revising the GSDS. The aim is to make the indicators an even better instrument for measuring progress.

Programme of Sustainability Measures (MP NHK)

The federal administration has set itself concrete goals with the Programme of Sustainability Measures, first adopted in 2010 and most recently updated in 2021, in order to make its own administrative activities sustainable. Progress with the implementation of these measures is determined annually and published in a monitoring report. Subject to the availability of the necessary budget funding and staffing positions, the ministries are responsible for ensuring that the Programme of Measures is implemented within their respective remits and the goals are achieved. The measures cover areas including making the federal administration climate-neutral by 2030, construction, mobility, procurement, events, canteens / mass catering, equal access to leadership positions, work/life balance for parents and carers, and diversity.

The monitoring reports for 2021 and 2022 showed progress in the implementation of these measures. By the end of 2022, around 22% of the measures had been largely implemented and around 32% partially implemented. The need to focus on national and collective defence since the invasion of Ukraine and the resulting *Zeitenwende* has a wide range of national and international implications for the Defence Ministry, and entails greater requirements concerning materiel, staffing and infrastructure projects as well as a significant increase in funding needs. The Programme of Measures is also to be applied to the action now being taken by the German Government in the face of these increased requirements. As part of this process, sufficient consideration must in particular be given to ensuring accelerated procurement to support the material readiness of the Bundeswehr.

An evaluation of the Programme of Measures is planned for 2025, including a review of reporting obligations. A value-for-money assessment will also be carried out in accordance with section 7 (2) of the Federal Budget Code (BHO).

Climate-Neutral Federal Administration Coordination Unit (KKB)

Pursuant to section 5 of the Federal Climate Change Act (KSG), the public sector serves as a role model and has committed to making the federal administration climate-neutral by 2030.

This requires a wide range of activities, which are supported and coordinated by the Climate-Neutral Federal Administration Coordination Unit, established at the Economic Affairs Ministry in 2020. One particular task of the Coordination Unit is to calculate the annual climate footprint for the direct federal administration.

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Procurement (KNB)

With procurement worth hundreds of billions of euros, the public sector plays a crucial role in driving demand for sustainable products and services. There are around 30,000 procurement bodies across the federal, *Land* and municipal levels, making knowledge transfer and knowledge-sharing an important factor in sustainable development.

As the German Government's central information and advice centre on sustainable public procurement, the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Procurement has since 2011 been supporting contracting authorities within the meaning of the Act against Restraints on Competition (GWB) in taking account of sustainability criteria in their procurements.

Activities of the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Procurement

Contracting authorities can, for example, contact the Centre via a telephone hotline and by email. It also offers training on sustainable procurement and on human rights in procurement. Together with the *Länder*, it operates a central information platform on all aspects of sustainable public procurement.

In its role as a network hub, the Centre works with all parts of society to support and shape solutions for sustainable public procurement. For example, it has negotiated an undertaking from Bitkom, Germany's digital industry association, to include social criteria in IT procurement. A joint further training initiative between the Federation and the *Länder* was established in 2023, based within the Centre for Excellence, with the aim of intensifying further training activities in the *Länder* on a broad footing in order to make sustainability in procurement the norm. Particularly in view of the digital transformation, alternative forms of support for public contracting authorities are to be promoted.

Interministerial Committee for Sustainable Public Procurement (IMA nÖB)

An Interministerial Committee for Sustainable Public Procurement was established in 2022 under the leadership of the Interior Ministry and Economic Affairs Ministry. Its tasks include

- coordinating measures to promote sustainable procurement,
- identifying and prioritising sustainable, standardisable products and services that are available on the German Government's online procurement platform Kaufhaus des Bundes (KDB),

- defining sustainability criteria for procurement by the Federation, and
- coordinating the production of guidance for authorities and institutions with regard to sustainable procurement.

In order to meet the aim of standardising sustainable public procurement as much as possible nationwide, the Committee involves other stakeholders in its work, not least the *Länder* and municipalities as well as civil society.

Further training

The Federal Academy of Public Administration (BAkÖV) is the German Government's central further training institute and does vital work to enable an agile, sustainable federal administration. Since 2020, it has offered training measures for federal administration staff on the topic of sustainability, in close cooperation with other federal authorities. These measures give staff the skills and knowledge that they need to implement important sustainability principles that strengthen the federal administration's strategic and operational action.

More than 1100 training events with a total of 23,000 participants have already been held. The range of training offered will be continuously updated over the next few years. The Academy thus supports the federal administration's function as a role model and contributes significantly to its modernisation, because this transformation depends on staff at all levels having comprehensive knowledge and skills in the field of sustainability.

d) Governance outlook

Advances have been made in sustainability governance to make it even more effective and binding. This process incorporated ideas from the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpm2030), among others. However, it should not be considered "complete". The aim is still to be able to react as flexibly as possible to changes, now and in the future.

Efforts to update the governance system are set to continue following the adoption of the revised GSDS. As well as updates to the system of targets and indicators, this affects forms of interministerial cooperation and vertical integration (*Länder*, municipalities), and the structures and processes for implementing and updating the GSDS themselves. One formalised goal should be to review and continue enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of existing structures. Overly complex processes must be avoided. This concerns not only the nature and scope of reporting but also the principles of interministerial cooperation. The transformation teams will be evaluated in this connection as well.

Recommendation by the Council for Sustainable Development, 13 November 2023:

“The Council also recommends that the German Government adopt a new policy decision at the beginning of the legislative term concerning the implementation of the SDGs (aligned with the content and publication date of the future coalition agreement).”

Council for Sustainable Development

II. Social mobilisation and participation

The success of the sustainable transformation depends not just on committed political and administrative action, but also on individual grassroots initiatives, associations, sporting and cultural institutions, academia, trade unions, businesses and voluntary work. Creating a sustainable Germany is a task for the whole of society, one that can only succeed through collaborative efforts across the local, regional and national levels.

In order to involve all of these levels and advance social change, people must be empowered to actively help shape transformation processes. Opportunities for civic engagement contribute to a strong civil society and a thriving democracy, as does greater appreciation for voluntary work. Being able to play an active role promotes people’s self-efficacy, or confidence in their own capabilities, and thus helps them to identify with the goals of sustainable development.

Municipalities, towns and cities in particular have a major role to play in this respect, as many of the SDGs can only be implemented at local level. As a venue for direct democracy, local communities are more important than ever (cf. [chapter C.I.1.b](#)). People can gain greater trust in the state and societal cohesion by helping to shape measures for a successful sustainable transformation and seeing and feeling the impact of these measures on the ground.

1. Academia, associations, civil society

In order for the GSDS to have the necessary impact, the German Government consistently involves relevant groups within society and their associations, as well as the academic community, in the implementation and further development of the Strategy.

a) Science Platform Sustainability 2030 (wpn2030)

Comprehensive know-how is needed for the sustainable transformation to succeed. This not only forms the basis for developing new technologies and sector-specific adaptation strategies, but also helps improve understanding of systemic factors and integrate them into the development of measures. Science and research thus make an essential contribution to solving current challenges (cf. [chapter C.IV.](#)). Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary science is particularly well-suited to producing integrated and solution-oriented knowledge for sustainability transformations.

In Germany, the scientific advisory boards to the ministries play a key role in incorporating research findings into government projects, as do expert committees and other advisory structures. In order to harness synergies and increase the effectiveness of scientific advice and critical monitoring of strategy development and implementation, information-sharing between these bodies is supported by, for example, the advisory board dialogue set up by wpn2030 and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Germany.

Established by the German Government, wpn2030 serves as an interface between researchers and politicians, allowing them to reflect on issues around sustainability policy and support the implementation and ongoing development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy with scientific expertise. The networks SDSN Germany and the German Committee Future Earth (DKN) are involved at all times. The platform also provides a space for reflecting on the Federation’s sustainability activities, addresses open issues from past experience and incorporates these into the scientific discussion.

The German Government’s Sustainable Finance Committee also provides valuable recommendations to support discussion of targeted approaches to the challenges of transformation, and result-oriented measures to drive these approaches.

b) Dialogue group

A dialogue group was formed in 2018 to give different parts of society a say in preparing meetings of the State Secretaries’ Committee. Members of the dialogue group, such as the German League for Nature Protection and the German Farmers’ Association, take part in expert discussions with the ministries, for example at the meetings to prepare the transformation reports.

The current dialogue group was convened on 1 January 2024 and has 15 members:

Dialogue group – organisations participating in ministry discussions in preparation for meetings of the State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development:

1. Friends of the Earth Germany
2. German League for Nature Protection
3. World Wide Fund for Nature
4. The Voice of German Industry
5. Confederation of German Employers’ Associations
6. German Environmental Management Association
7. German Farmers’ Association
8. German Trade Union Confederation
9. Federation of German Consumer Organisations
10. Commissariat of German Bishops / Evangelical Church in Germany
11. German Federal Youth Council
12. VENRO
13. German Forum on Environment and Development
14. Germanwatch
15. Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Depending on the topic of the meeting, up to five other relevant organisations or institutions may also be invited.

One conclusion from the consultation phase for the GSDS update is that, in the future, the dialogue group will also include three organisations that help to ensure special consideration for equality – one each focusing on women, people with disabilities, and migrants. Thought is also being given to ensuring greater involvement by young people, beyond the participation of the German Federal Youth Council. These steps will support the development of sustainable solutions for the common good.

c) Civil society

To give due consideration to fears, resistance and conflicts around the transformation of our economy and society, suitable participation processes must be created for all. These must empower all sections of civil society, young people, older people, people with disabilities, people of migrant origin, people of colour and financially less well-off people to make their voices heard and help shape the transformation. The UN calls this the Inclusion Imperative and stresses that “inclusion, empowerment and equality” must be “at the heart of our efforts” for sustainable development. Accordingly, the social dimension has been comprehensively considered in the updated GSDS. The area of transformation “Human well-being and capabilities, social justice” ([chapter B.I.](#)) also highlights basic measures to this end. [Chapter C.II.4.](#) describes the participation process behind the GSDS.

Teenagers and seniors

Young people need improved opportunities to help shape a sustainable future. Many young people are concerned about political choices being made today that will define their future. They call for sustainable, equitable policymaking and ways of doing business that do not come at a cost to their generation or subsequent generations. Teenagers in particular must therefore have opportunities to participate and make active contributions.

Greater opportunities for young people to participate are a key priority of the German Government’s policy. The voting age for European Parliament elections was therefore reduced to 16 years on 11 November 2022. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has also updated the Youth Strategy since 2022 with a National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation.

In recent years, many federal ministries have established their own youth schemes for consultative participation in political processes in fields such as climate (Federal Foreign Office, Economic Affairs Ministry, Family Affairs Ministry, Environment Ministry, Development Ministry) or to prepare the transformation reports (cf. [chapter B.V.](#)). Young people also play a major role in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), both in shaping action and as a target group.

During the process of updating the GSDS, representatives of youth organisations and advisory boards were invited to the Sustainability Forum and to a workshop discussion on youth participation (cf. [chapter C.II.4.](#)).

In addition to involvement in political processes, the voluntary social year and other voluntary services in Germany offer young people good opportunities for civic engagement and participation in societal processes.

Civic engagement opens up new perspectives and makes people more tolerant of differing opinions. It also teaches important social skills needed for shaping the transformation, strengthens our democratic system and makes solidarity tangible.

However, the principle of solidarity and social justice also requires the needs of different generations to be reconciled. In light of current demographic change, a broad spectrum of structural change will be necessary to enable not just younger people but also older and ageing people to enjoy consistent involvement in participatory processes and life in their communities. This includes adapting teaching programmes for older people and building skills in the area of digitalisation in particular (cf. [chapter B.I.](#)).

Inclusion

In a society where we see diversity as an asset, we must meet a range of different requirements to ensure that all groups participate in society. Inclusion is not primarily about demanding that people who are “different” adapt, but about adapting the social environment to people. For policymakers, this means putting in place the conditions needed for everyone to have equal access to all areas of life and removing barriers that lead to exclusion.

The implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the tasks set out in October 2023 by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the independent expert body for the implementation of the Convention, in the form of concluding observations, form the basis for creating these conditions. At federal level, the Convention is implemented via a National Action Plan. Already on its second version, this is a catalogue of measures that will be continually updated, reviewed and supplemented. It contains more than 400 schemes, projects and activities covering all areas of life for people with disabilities, in order to gradually close gaps between the legal situation and reality.

Equality

People’s gender or origin can also be a barrier to equal participation in social transformation processes in Germany. Gender equality is therefore a core aim of government action. All people, regardless of their gender, must have the same opportunities throughout their personal, professional and family lives.

In order to give greater prominence to the issue of equality within the social-ecological transformation and to genuinely take gender equality into account in all relevant policy areas, the opinion on the Fourth Gender Equality Report is to provide recommendations for action (cf. [chapter B.I.3.e](#)). Together with more consistent use of regulatory impact assessments focusing on equality, this can help ensure that gender is sufficiently considered in sustainable development. The German

Government is committed to gender equality at international level, too, and works with various partners for this purpose. Equal rights, equal opportunities and equal power for all genders are explicit objectives of German development and foreign policy (cf. [chapter C.V.](#)). In order to integrate the objectives of gender justice and equality even more closely into the GSDS, a workshop meeting on the topic was also held as part of the update process (cf. [chapter C.II.4.](#)).

Integration and anti-racism

Respect, mutual trust, shared responsibility and a sense of community should shape the way we live together here. This requires the successful integration of immigrants, and efforts to fight racism. The aim of integration is to strengthen cohesion throughout society. Integrating the people who come to our country as swiftly and sustainably as possible benefits not only them but all of us. Integration is a task for the whole of society.

Participation in the labour market is essential for successful integration. Paid work offers not only a stable income and financial independence, but also the opportunity to actively participate in society. Improving labour market integration is key in order to eliminate difficulties caused, for example, by a lower level of school or vocational education, a (temporary or permanent) lack of recognition for professional qualifications obtained abroad, or a lack of available information and advice on labour market issues.

This integration process depends not least on language acquisition as a crucial factor in successful integration and participation.

Integration courses are offered by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) to help immigrants integrate into society. The integration course system was established in 2005 and has undergone continuous needs-oriented development since then, aiming to help participants complete their courses more quickly and thus to support their integration into the labour market. The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community is responsible for the BAMF’s integration courses. The occupational language courses that build on the integration courses comprise a broad, demand-oriented offering for integration into the labour market. They prepare migrants and refugees for the world of work in Germany and are also administered by the BAMF. Funding the occupational language courses falls within the remit of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Germany has also improved integration prospects by introducing one of the most modern immigration laws. The Act to Modernise Nationality Law (StARModG) entered into force on 27 June 2024. Under this Act, people who work in Germany and are well integrated can become German nationals after just five years instead of eight. They no longer need to give

up their previous nationality and thus a part of their identity. Under certain strict conditions, naturalisation will even be possible after just three years.

Integration requires commitment in many areas of life and from all levels of government. It involves contributions from many federal ministries, the *Länder* and above all the local level, as well as many non-governmental stakeholders. The importance of civil-society involvement has become particularly evident in the context of refugee arrivals in Germany in recent years. Successful integration promotes overall societal cohesion while also boosting our country's appeal for skilled workers from abroad. One important part of this is a consistent effort to fight racism.

The report *Racism in Germany*, published for the first time in 2023 by the Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism, provides an overview of the status quo and measures already taken by the German Government. It also identifies gaps in prevention work as well as advice and support services. It highlights research needs and urgent areas of action – in politics, wider society, the workplace, education, healthcare and the work of the security authorities. At the heart of the issue is empowering people and giving back control to those affected by racism. They should be heard, know their rights and be empowered to act.

The Anti-Racism Commissioner supports numerous projects to this end. One example is a community-based counselling and advice scheme (*Community-basierte Beratung gegen Rassismus*) that works to expand and improve the coverage of these services in Germany in line with the needs of those affected. Following a racist incident, it should be possible to quickly and easily access professional help, in both urban and rural areas, in both the east and west of Germany. Other projects aim to improve protection for local politicians and decision-makers against racist and far-right hostility and attacks, strengthen initiatives by and for those affected, and fight against racism in organised sport.

Positive example: sport

Sport teaches values such as fair play and tolerance, encourages people to engage in volunteer work, and promotes integration into society. It creates community thanks to its deep roots at the local level. There are over 86,000 sports clubs in Germany, with over 28 million memberships in total – far more than any other voluntary organisations. With extensive structures and networks, plentiful events, and prominent women athletes setting an example, sport reaches broad swathes of the population and can therefore play a crucial role in the success of the sustainable transformation.

The sporting sector is an important partner for environmental and nature conservation, and at the same time is particularly challenged by climate change. Sport can show how to trans-

late environmental and social aims into tangible sustainable action, for example in the areas of mobility, nutrition, equality and inclusion. Sporting events are often particularly in the spotlight when it comes to the question of sustainable implementation. Their reach makes them an important venue for sharing sustainable values and practices. A project looking at sustainability for major sporting events in Germany (*Nachhaltige Sport[groß]veranstaltungen in Deutschland*), funded by the Interior Ministry and Environment Ministry, developed a portal addressing all aspects of sustainability for future event organisers. This includes practical recommendations for action in all relevant areas, and examples of good practice as well as minimum standards for future large-scale events. A particular role is played by major international sporting competitions such as the men's European football championship EURO 2024, held in Germany from 14 June to 14 July 2024. The Federation, *Länder* and host cities as well as the German Football Association, UEFA and EURO 2024 GmbH drew up the "Joint understanding of a sustainable UEFA EURO 2024™ tournament", which covered all three dimensions of sustainability and explored how to minimise or, if necessary, compensate for negative effects on the environment, the climate and natural resources, among other things. To this end the German Government supported various projects and measures in all dimensions of sustainability, which are presented in the final report on EURO 2024 that it published on 3 December 2024.

Positive example: culture

The cultural sector benefits society by offering guidance on a vast range of issues. Art affects us emotionally and serves as a kind of informal education. It is therefore an especially good way to share knowledge and visions for the future, and it actively names the changes that are needed as well as motivating people to see and think about things in new ways. Cultural institutions, like sport, are not only a venue for teaching and sharing, but must also adapt their own structures in line with the principle of sustainability. This will allow the cultural sector to serve as a role model.

Publicly funded institutions in particular have a leading role to play in this green transformation. That especially applies to cultural infrastructure. For example, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media funds a Green Culture hub to support the sustainable green transformation of the cultural and media sector through advice, networking and knowledge transfer.

To address their environmental footprint, cultural institutions use certified management approaches as well as environmental and sustainability management systems such as the German Sustainability Code, ECOPROFIT, Economy for the Common Good, KlimaBilanzKultur (KBK, "cultural climate footprint") and KlimaBilanzKultur+ (KBK+) as well as EMAS and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

These are mapped with a new indicator introduced in the 2025 GSDS, measuring the proportion of cultural and media institutions that have some form of sustainable certification. Furthermore, guides and sector-specific minimum standards have been developed at the initiative of cultural institutions and their umbrella associations, such as the Theatre Green Book or the guide by the German Museums Association, making their own significant contribution to the transformation and to raising awareness within cultural institutions.

“Culture shapes change by giving sense and meaning to people’s actions.”

Statement by the Office for Culture and Monument Protection, Dresden, state capital of Saxony

Culture thus has a positive impact on social mobilisation and participation. Social and cultural experiences boost human capabilities and foster societal cohesion.

2. Joint Action for Sustainable Development

Germany’s transformation towards sustainability can only happen through a collective effort. Progress on the path towards sustainable development can only be achieved through respectful cooperation if everyone does their part in line with their interests, opportunities, talents and skills.

On 26 September 2022, Minister of State Sarah Ryglewski, representing Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and the Chair of the Conference of Minister-Presidents, Hendrik Wüst (North Rhine-Westphalia), together launched the Joint Action for Sustainable Development web platform. Joint Action for Sustainable Development is based on an initiative by the German Government and the *Länder*. Its aim is to make existing efforts towards sustainability in policy, business, science and civil society more visible, motivate more individuals and organisations to commit to sustainable development and create connections between different stakeholders. Federal ministries, the Federal Chancellery and the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government are also members of this network.

The main focuses of Joint Action for Sustainable Development were sustainable building in 2023 and housing and biodiversity in 2024. Through the Joint Action platform, civil-society organisations can also showcase their engagement during the annual German Sustainability Action Days (DAN), organised by the Council for Sustainable Development, and inspire others to do their part.

European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) and German Sustainability Action Days (DAN)

The annual European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) in Germany is organised by the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE).

This Europe-wide initiative aims to launch activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development.

The German Sustainability Action Days (DAN) take place throughout Germany during this period. They are part of the European Sustainable Development Week, and therefore visible across Europe. During the German Sustainability Action Days, throughout Germany, all interested parties – be they individuals, associations, businesses, universities, municipalities, churches and others – are invited to contribute ideas.

In 2024, a total of 1997 activities took place in Germany, while 4009 activities were held across 39 countries in Europe.

Figure 12: Joint Action for Sustainable Development

**JOINT ACTION
FOR sustainable
development**

Since 2021, the RNE has successfully devised and, with great dedication, implemented the Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform on behalf of the German Government and the *Länder*. It has therefore laid important and valuable foundations for Joint Action. At the beginning of 2025, Engagement Global gGmbH (EG) will take over responsibility for implementation of Joint Action on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. By building on the substantial work of the RNE to date, resulting synergies can be used to reach even more people.

Through EG, the German Government is already promoting a wide range of support programmes for citizens, associations, schools, municipalities and many other social groups committed to – or interested in – contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (more information can be found online at www.bmz.de/mitmachen, in German).

3. Communications

Communications on the implementation of the GSDS is at the core of Germany’s sustainability policy. Press and public relations work is therefore carried out by the entire German Government. Transformation can only be achieved together

with society and within it. The German Government's communications on the topic of sustainability thus pursues three different objectives:

1. Increasing awareness of the 2030 Agenda, its 17 SDGs and the GSDS. Particular attention is paid to communicating the global and national challenges and objectives.
2. Informing the public about important developments and German Government activities relating to sustainability. The Government explains the rationale behind its measures to help the public better understand them.
3. Working together towards a sustainable future for humanity, ensuring active participation by everyone, especially that of vulnerable groups. The German Government also encourages each and every individual to embrace and practise sustainability in their own lives.

In communications on sustainable development, the German Government employs a variety of instruments, including its official website, the regularly published German newsletter *Nachhaltigkeit aktuell*, a range of online publications and its social media channels. Sustainability-related content is also distributed via the Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform. Information published on topics of sustainability also covers the activities of the Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor, Sarah Ryglewski.

During the German Government's Open Day, the Federal Chancellery, the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government and the ministries invite citizens to engage directly with the Government on subjects relating to sustainability. In-person events taking place as part of the ongoing development of the GSDS also serve as a key factor for fostering communication and participation in the dialogue between the German Government and civil society.

4. Dialogue process supporting the German Sustainable Development Strategy

Every four years, the German Government updates the GSDS together with all sections of society. It relies very heavily on dialogue and transparency in the revision process. The objective is to put sustainability into practice in everyday life.

The participation process for updating the existing strategy, spanning several stages, began as early as October 2023 with two in-person conferences: a kick-off conference in Berlin on 19 October 2023 and a regional conference in Bremen on 7 December 2023.

a) Kick-off conference in Berlin on 19 October 2023

The Berlin conference was organised by the German Government together with Land Berlin. Some 350 participants attended the event, which focused on updating the GSDS and establishing a new Berlin Sustainability Strategy. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Kai Wegner, the Governing Mayor of Berlin, officially opened the conference via pre-recorded video messages. With Steffi Lemke (Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection), Svenja Schulze (Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development) and Sarah Ryglewski (Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor), the Federal Government had high-level representatives throughout the entire conference.

During various panels and debates, participants discussed how the SDGs can be achieved in Germany. Among other topics, they exchanged views on whether reducing bureaucracy could make a significant difference in this context.

In five workshops, participants delved deeper into the areas of transformation of the GSDS and policy advice. These workshops were organised by the responsible ministries, the RNE and wpn2030. The federal ministries then consolidated the workshops' outcomes and published them online.

b) Regional conference in Bremen on 7 December 2023

A regional conference was organised by the German Government in cooperation with the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen and the University of Bremen. Around 200 interested parties held discussions with Minister of State Sarah Ryglewski, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Environment Ministry Dr Bettina Hoffmann, as well as Bremen's Mayor Andreas Bovenschulte and the city's Senator for the Environment Kathrin Moosdorf.

The main theme of the Bremen conference was the role of education and science in advancing sustainability. Many participants believed that greater communication about what is already technically possible and establishing dialogue between all sections of society and generations is crucial for success. They also highlighted the importance of integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a core skill into school curricula. In specialised workshops, participants addressed cross-cutting issues related to the areas of transformation and the individual levers of the GSDS.

c) Participation process with an online dialogue

Once again, interested parties were able to participate online in the further development of the GSDS. A dedicated website with a forum function – created collaboratively by the Federal Chancellery, the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government and the Federal Ministry of Defence – allowed users to post comments on the draft version of the GSDS,

Figure 13: Process of updating the GSDS

4 October 2023	Federal Cabinet: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mid-term review
19 Oktober 2023	Kick-off conference in Berlin
7 December 2023	Regional Dialogue Conference in Bremen
thereafter	Development of the draft version as part of the UAL-AG
Spring 2024	Consultations at the StA NHK
May–July 2024	Online participation and opportunity to submit written comments
May–July 2024	Workshop meetings at the Federal Chancellery
2 September 2024	Sustainability Forum (discussion on the further development of the GSDS)
thereafter	Revision of draft
January 2025	StA NHK: Approval of the final draft
January 2025	Federal Cabinet: Adoption of the GSDS

view contributions from other users and “like” them. From May until the end of July 2024, citizens, associations and organisations thus had the opportunity to contribute their ideas and suggestions for a sustainable Germany.

Overall, around 2000 people made use of the online platform and posted some 900 entries. In addition, more than 50 people submitted their comments by email. All contributions and statements were evaluated by the federal ministries responsible for the further development of the GSDS.

Many local stakeholders, such as municipalities, also took an active part in the dialogue, as they play a pivotal part in implementing the UN’s SDGs and the 2030 Agenda (cf. [chapter Cl.2.](#)). To complement the online dialogue, Minister of State Ryglewski invited participants to three workshop meetings at the Federal Chancellery.

d) Workshop meeting on youth participation

On 28 May 2024, Minister of State Ryglewski spoke with representatives of youth organisations including the German Federal Youth Council, the Federation of Alevi Youth in Germany, the Federation of German Catholic Youth, the Federal Youth Organisation of the National Society for Worker Welfare (AWO), the youth arm of the German Alpine Club, Young Friends of the Earth Germany, the German Youth Fire Brigade, the Youth Association for the Protection of Nature and the Youth Organisation of the Federal Agency for Technical Relief. The discussion shed light on the various areas of transformation from a youth perspective and explored oppor-

tunities for young people to become involved. Key points included the role of youth associations as extracurricular learning spaces for democracy, funding requirements for these efforts, investment for future growth, the importance of providing a basic child allowance, current health risks facing youth (including mental health), the need for quality education, as well as climate action and social aspects.

e) Workshop meeting on labour and social affairs

On 9 July 2024, Minister of State Sarah Ryglewski met with high-ranking representatives of unions and employer associations and members of the academic community to discuss the significance of labour and social affairs in achieving sustainable development. Representatives from the German Trade Union Confederation, the Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union, the Federation of German Industries, the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations and RWI – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research reaffirmed that sustainability plays a critical role in making Germany fit for the future. Among the subjects discussed were collective bargaining coverage, co-determination, investment for future growth, social security systems, basic and continuing education and training, gender equality, the role of the *Länder* and municipalities in promoting sustainability, and approaches for measuring overall prosperity and well-being. All participants agreed that safeguarding prosperity calls for long-term strategies and policy frameworks that meet people’s needs for peace, decent employment and a high quality of life. Especially at a time of upheaval, the significance of social cohesion cannot be overstated.

f) Workshop meeting on gender equality

On 9 July 2024, women representatives of the Federal Foundation for Gender Equality, the National Council of German Women's Organisations, the German Women Lawyers Association, the initiative for the appointment of more women to boards of directors (FidAR) and UN Women Deutschland met with Minister of State Ryglewski to discuss how gender equality, treated as an overarching issue and lever for transformation, can have a sustainable impact and which equality policy issues are important in this context. They highlighted, among other points, the need for further reducing pay disparities (e.g. the gender pay gap), achieving a fairer distribution of care work (e.g. the gender care gap), consequential action in systematically pursuing gender equality in the appointment of leadership and decision-making positions, and consistently incorporating a gender perspective into regulatory impact assessments and the design of public budgets (i.e. gender budgeting).

g) Sustainability Forum

The Sustainability Forum, held annually since 2017, is where the German Government consults with social stakeholders on progress with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This year's forum, focusing on the further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy, took place on 2 September 2024 at the Federal Chancellery with over 140 participants. Around 60 associations, institutions and organisations – representing business, science, environmental protection, youth, development cooperation, churches, trade unions, migrant support networks and municipalities – joined Minister of State Ryglewski, the *Länder* and all federal ministries to discuss the GSDS. The draft version of the GSDS, published on 31 May 2024, along with the statements gathered during the dialogue process, formed the basis of the plenary discussion. These organisations were also given the opportunity in advance to submit key statements on how the GSDS should be further developed, which were subsequently presented during the plenary.

Led by the relevant federal ministries, smaller workshops provided an additional forum for intensive debate on the issues raised by citizens during the online dialogue:

- The social dimension of sustainability
- The social-ecological market economy
- Inclusion
- Nutrition
- Circular economy
- Biodiversity

With an additional workshop, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection launched the participation process for the Voluntary National Review (VNR), which will be presented at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2025. The VNR outlines the current state of the 2030 Agenda's implementation in, with and by Germany. Germany has already presented two VNR reports, in 2016 and most recently in 2021. During the workshop, ministries and stakeholders exchanged views on possible content and forms of participation.

III. Finances

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals requires more than just action in the relevant policy fields. It also demands a framework that makes sustainable development possible in the first place.

Financial policy plays a key role in this. Therefore, sustainable finance has long since been an important issue for the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) and the work of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development.

“The State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development reaffirms that sound public finances are not an end in themselves. Rather, they form the basis for sustained economic growth, environmental protection and climate action, as well as a fair social welfare system fit for the future. Ensuring solid public finances is therefore a key pillar of the German Government's Sustainability Strategy.”

Decision of 4 January 2016 by the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development, Sustainable finance – sound and intergenerationally equitable

A sound financial policy geared towards sustainability is an important contribution towards sustainable policies as well as intergenerational equity. Moreover, it is a powerful lever for fostering transformation in the economy and society (cf. the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mid-term review “Courageously shaping the future together – Picking up more speed”](#) dated 4 October 2023, Chapter II. 8. “Orient finances coherently and comprehensively to sustainability”, Bundestag printed paper no. 20/8719, in German). The German Government's financial policy is aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the Federation's explicit and implicit liabilities with sound state finances and, at the same time, at enabling the necessary investment to make Germany fit for the future.

The German Government is honouring its pledge to facilitate a decade of investment in a modern, digital and greenhouse gas-neutral Germany and is increasing federal investment to exceed the current high level.

What is more, the German Government is creating the necessary conditions for mobilising private-sector investment, which accounts for around 90% of overall economic investment in Germany. To this end, the state provides tangible incentives with reliable conditions and a conducive environment for innovation, the establishment of new businesses and research. This includes improving funding opportunities for young and innovative companies through regulatory and tax measures.

1. Aim

a) A financial policy geared towards stability

Through its financial policy, the German Government will continue to ensure the soundness of public finances and the sustainability of the national debt, while at the same time strengthening economic growth potential on a lasting basis through the efficient use of budget resources and targeted investment – also in order to meet challenges such as demographic ageing, decarbonisation and the comparatively weak development of productivity. All of this fosters the transformation to an economy and society fit for the future. Sustainable public finances create a good framework for private-sector investment, thus laying the foundation for prosperity in our society. In this way, they contribute directly towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 8).

For this purpose, the German Government is pursuing a financial policy which is efficient and constructive. It is efficient because it prioritises and evaluates spending on an ongoing basis. This ensures the sustainability of public finances as well as fiscal resilience in future crises. At the same time, the German Government aims to make possible the investment needed to make Germany fit for the future. It is constructive because it helps address medium- to long-term challenges on both the revenue and the expenditure side.

b) Making Germany a leading international location for sustainable finance

Climate change, biodiversity loss, social inequality and other pressures on environmental boundaries are triggering fundamental social-ecological change that must be shaped successfully. Pursuant to Article 2 (1) (c) of the Paris Agreement, finance flows must be consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

Sustainable finance helps to ensure that the financial opportunities and risks the transformation entails are correctly assessed and that as much private-sector investment as

possible is mobilised and used effectively, just like public investment. Private-sector investment is necessary to make production processes, supply chains and business models future-proof. It is equally important to strengthen sustainable economic structures. Increased support is being given for real economic investment and activities that are necessary to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Against this background, the German Government has set itself the goal of transforming Germany into an international pioneer in sustainable finance. As one of the world's leading financial centres, Germany wants to promote the expertise, infrastructure and a practical regulatory framework for sustainable finance at national, European and international level. In order to achieve this, it relies heavily, among other things, on the advice of practitioners in the German Government's Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee.

“The State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development notes that sustainable finance can support the implementation of the German Government’s financial market stability, energy, climate, development and other sustainability goals. It is aware that, in particular, environmental and related changes in the real economy can pose significant risks to individual financial market players and to the financial market as a whole. Sustainable finance can help successfully address the national, European and international dimensions of these changes, challenges and risks.”

Decision of 25 February 2019 by the State Secretaries’ Committee for Sustainable Development, “Sustainable Finance”

These are essential prerequisites for creating a sufficiently deep capital pool for sustainable investment, so that the economy can be transformed successfully for all – for large corporations as well as SMEs.

The Federation itself is leading by example here. Through its financial decisions, it has helped to make Germany a leading location for sustainable finance by becoming one of the world's largest state issuers of green securities and acting sustainably with regard to its own investments (e.g. KENFO, Supplementary Pensions Agency for Federal and *Länder* Employees – VBL, federal civil-service pension fund).

A further focus is on promoting sustainable finance in developing countries and emerging economies as part of German development cooperation, in order to contribute towards a social-ecological transformation and to mobilise appropriate funding in those countries, too.

c) Strengthening performance budgeting in relation to the SDGs

Financial and budget policy is to be used to an even greater extent as a strategic lever for sustainable development. At a time of structurally declining budgetary leeway, as well as a simultaneous rise in the number of challenges when it comes to sustainably modernising the economy and society, ways must be found to achieve government goals efficiently. This is one of the key advantages of performance budgeting.

Performance budgeting in particular, among other things in relation to the SDGs in the federal budget, is to be strengthened. European neighbours, such as Austria, are going down this road, too. This is intended to provide greater clarity as to whether and how budgetary measures help achieve the SDGs. Assessing the impact of measures on SDGs can pose challenges, however, for example in the field of basic research (cf. the [report on the 11th spending review](#), in German).

The expansion of performance budgeting will make a tangible contribution towards helping to gradually improve the impact of financial measures, thus further enhancing the quality of public finances as a whole.

2. Measures taken

a) Financial policy geared towards achieving resilient and sustainable public finances

The rise in interest rates in the wake of the monetary policy measures taken to tackle inflation is a reminder that the sustainability of public finances must be ensured at all times in an uncertain world plagued by risks of interest rate changes and risks to growth. A financial policy geared towards stability therefore ensures that the overall national debt ratio does not continue to grow from crisis to crisis, also in order to avoid additional sustainability risks arising from structurally increasing federal expenditure on interest payments. This is an expression of fiscal resilience and financial sustainability for a state which must be able to take financial measures at any time and if necessary, on a large scale.

Preserving and expanding public infrastructure is of great importance for sustainable and resilient economic development. That is why public investment is a high priority for the German Government. Although combating the effects of the crisis has placed a heavy burden on the budget, the German Government has increased public investment, thus enhancing the basis for economic growth. It is essential to continue along this path. However, public investment is just one element. Above all, private-sector investment is needed for economic development. The German Government is working to improve the investment environment, for example by reducing bureaucratic obstacles so that private-sector investment, too, can increase.

Moreover, if private-sector investment is to be successfully mobilised then uncertainties must be minimised, for instance with regard to future taxes and interest rates. Sustainable public finances and modern infrastructure are a key prerequisite for “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth” (SDG 8).

Report on the Sustainability of Public Finances

The Federal Ministry of Finance publishes in-depth analyses of the long-term development of public finances and their sustainability once per legislative term in its Report on the Sustainability of Public Finances. The Ministry’s sixth report was published in February 2024. The projections in the report extrapolate demographic-related spending in the overall budget in various scenarios. According to the sixth report, the sustainability of public finances cannot be taken for granted. In order to ensure sustainability, it will be crucial to initiate and continue the necessary reforms that have a positive impact on the development of public finances.

b) Investment in the future in the federal budget strengthened

In addition, investment in the future has been substantially strengthened in the federal budget. The German Government is investing at a high level and setting clear priorities – for stronger growth and increased prosperity, greater security, better education, sustainable climate action and faster digitalisation. Specifically, it is investing in efficient infrastructure, faster internet, road and rail networks, reliable energy supplies and an agile and digital state, thus supporting the German economy in mastering the transformation processes.

c) Spending reviews carried out and the implementation of the recommendations initiated

With the help of two issue-specific budget analyses (10th and 11th spending reviews), the process of embedding Sustainable Development Goals in the federal budget was begun, and performance budgeting further developed.

Led by the Federal Ministry of Finance and with the participation of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the 10th spending review dealt with embedding Sustainable Development Goals in the federal budget. The aim is to link departmental budgets, chapters and titles of the federal budget with SDGs. The recommendations of the 10th spending review include signalling, i.e. the inclusion of SDGs in the forewords and preliminary remarks of the departmental

budgets and chapters of the federal budget, as well as tagging, i.e. the allocation of SDGs to specific titles in the federal budget.

The 11th spending review on “Improving performance budgeting in the federal budget, with a particular focus on sustainability” was led by the Federal Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, as well as with the participation of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport. The concrete aim was to improve the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the SDGs and to ensure that performance budgeting with a focus on sustainability was embedded throughout the budget cycle. By specifically linking budget titles with Sustainable Development Goals, for example, it would be possible to more efficiently and specifically direct, review and manage federal spending on environmental or development projects to achieve the SDGs.

At its session on 10 April, the Federal Cabinet took note of the final report of the 11th spending review and commissioned the Federal Ministry of Finance to carry out the 12th spending review with other ministries on the implementation of recommendations to improve performance budgeting. This spending review follows on from the work of the now concluded 11th spending review and draws up the initial implementing steps, in particular on evaluation, indicators and impact assessment.

d) Improvements of the financing environment for young and innovative companies implemented

With the Financing for the Future Act (ZuFinG), which entered into force in December 2023, numerous measures were taken to enhance the framework conditions for the capital market and for start-ups with this goal in mind: the option to issue multiple-vote shares, tax relief for employee share ownership, as well as innovations such as electronic shares have improved financing conditions for companies.

e) Foundation laid in the sphere of sustainable finance

The German Government has laid important foundations in the area of sustainable finance, e.g. with the successful establishment and expansion of the issue of green federal securities, the further development of the investment of the federal civil-service pension fund in keeping with the goal of the Paris Agreement, or the establishment of the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) in Frankfurt as the key standard-setter for global sustainability reporting. These

measures are also important for mobilising private-sector investment in sustainable projects in developing countries and emerging economies which are key to achieving the SDGs.

At the same time, the German Government is actively working at European level to promote the practical further development of sustainable finance, including coherent and practice-oriented rules for sustainability-related corporate and financial information and a stronger focus on companies during the transition.

The Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee (SFB, www.sustainable-finance-beirat.de), established on 10 June 2022 for the 20th legislative term, is an important partner for the German Government. This independent multi-stakeholder body advises the German Government on what positions it should take, as well as on the implementation and further development of guidelines in the sphere of sustainable finance. It also puts forward concrete proposals on how the financial sector can better support the real economy in its transformation to achieve the SDGs and to implement the Paris Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework. These contributions provide key impetus for the German Government’s discussion and strategy on sustainable finance.

On 22 November 2024, the Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee presented its compendium entitled “Funding our tomorrow – How private capital makes the difference for Germany’s transformation”. It contains 13 recommendations for action on financing the transformation into a resilient, competitive and sustainable economy (sustainable-finance-beirat.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/SFB_Kompendium_Funding_our_Tomorrow.pdf, in German).

The Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee’s concept for a sustainable financial system 2023

The Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee published a concept for a sustainable financial system. According to the concept, “finance” will be synonymous with “sustainable finance” in 2034 – there will no longer be any distinction, since sustainability will be an integral part of all risk management and decision-making processes. The players on the financial market will support the transformation of the real economy with ambition and in a responsible manner.

sustainable-finance-beirat.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/SFB_Zukunftsbild_DE.pdf

f) Strengthening international cooperation and advancing a needs-based reform of the international financial architecture

With 33.89 billion euro (0.85% of gross national income) in 2022, Germany was the world's second-largest ODA donor (official development assistance). This sum includes all Germany's payments to developing countries which count as ODA and encompasses the contributions of all federal ministries, the *Länder* and the municipalities, including spending on refugees in Germany, as well as costs relating to students from developing countries studying in Germany.

Germany is also a reliable partner in international climate finance. In 2023, Germany's international climate finance amounted to around 9.9 billion euro, of which approximately 5.7 billion euro came from the federal budget. Germany is thus recognised worldwide as one of the leading donors and is doing its part to support partner countries. This strengthens Germany's role at multilateral and regional level.

In addition to financing projects eligible for support from budgetary resources within the context of development policy, the Federation makes it possible for ODA-eligible loans to be granted from market funds of the KfW Entwicklungsbank by providing guarantees. In 2022, these guarantees enabled KfW to provide loans from market funds amounting to 4.8 billion euro.

However, bilateral ODA payments alone cannot and should not be the primary source of funding for global development in the longer term. Germany therefore supports a needs-based reform of the international financial architecture, including reform of the World Bank Group, which Germany played a key role in initiating, as well as increased efficiency and co-operation of regional development banks. In September 2023, Germany was the first shareholder to announce that it would provide the World Bank with hybrid capital to the tune of 305 million euro to expand its financing framework.

Germany is actively working to find solutions for overly indebted states, including in particular support for the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments to implement coordinated debt restructuring. Germany is also one of the few countries in the world with a detailed bilateral debt conversion programme (up to 150 million euro per year).

In the field of international tax policy, Germany supports fairer international tax systems, in particular through the implementation of the OECD's Two-Pillar Solution to reform international business taxation. In addition, Germany is participating at UN level in the work on international tax cooperation and is making a constructive contribution to the negotiations for a UN framework convention. Discussions within the UN institutional framework are intended to make possible potential next steps to strengthen the effectiveness

and inclusiveness of international tax cooperation. In this regard, Germany believes it is important to avoid the duplication of work at institutional level, also in order to prevent possible legal uncertainties arising from this.

3. Next steps

a) Continuing to pursue a financial policy geared towards stability

Within the context of stability-oriented financial policy, public investment must continue to be strengthened in the coming years despite challenging fiscal conditions. In particular, we need to counter the risk of low growth rates through a broad-based economic and financial policy agenda, to secure Germany's international competitiveness and to drive forward transformation.

In order to ensure long-term sustainability, the demographic challenges in all relevant policy areas will require a balanced mix of structural reforms and other legal and sub-legislative measures.

Quote from the public participation process (comment by Clara-Johanna):

"We need consistent investment in nature conservation and climate action. But that does not mean across-the-board subsidies which may only benefit large companies or corporations. Not using up financial resources, but investing in the future, in rail, digitalisation, solar expansion, unsealing and greening public spaces. [...]"

b) Initiative for Growth – new economic dynamism

Germany as a business location is facing major structural challenges and needs impetus for greater economic dynamism. The German Government therefore launched the Initiative for Growth on 17 July 2024. The aim of the Initiative for Growth is to strengthen productivity and innovativeness in the German economy.

In order to reduce the burden on the public and companies, the German Government has, among other things, increased tax allowances and adjusted the income tax rate to inflation.

c) Completing a budget analysis on improving performance budgeting in the federal budget, with a particular focus on sustainability

Following the completion of the issues-related budget analysis on improving performance budgeting in the federal budget with a focus on sustainability, the recommendations from the 10th and 11th spending reviews are being rigorously implemented.

After the successful signalling and tagging pilot phase outlined in the 10th spending review during the preparation of the 2024 budget, all other departmental budgets of the ministries and the Federal Chancellery will be included in the preparation process for the 2025 federal budget (roll-out). In order to ensure a smooth introduction, the number of major object classes and titles to be tagged per departmental budget will remain limited. Following a successful roll-out, the aim is to ensure that all relevant major object classes are fully tagged in the coming years.

d) Implementing a Sustainable Finance Strategy with an international reach

Building on the recommendations of the Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee, the German Government is implementing a Sustainable Finance Strategy with an international reach on an ongoing basis.

The Federation is also continuing its strategy regarding the issuance of green federal securities, coupled with a high degree of transparency with respect to recognised green spending, the impact on the climate, environment and nature, and price formation. An update of the Green Bond Framework is to take into account current market standards and the expectations of sustainable investors. The transparency of green spending is to be further strengthened, in particular as regards applicability and compliance with the EU taxonomy.

e) Working to improve the practicability and coherence of sustainable finance regulation at EU level and helping shape work in international working groups

The German Government will also work to improve the practicability and coherence of sustainable finance regulation at EU level and to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. To this end, it will work at European level to revise the Green Asset Ratio for banks in order to improve its relevance as a key driver of transformation. At the same time, it supports a review of the Taxonomy Regulation, the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive in order to prevent duplicate reporting obligations. The German Government will help shape the work of key international working groups, such as the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group, and will support initiatives such as the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). Aspects of promoting the interoperability of different international sustainable finance frameworks will also be taken into consideration. The German Government also welcomes initiatives such as the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), which are intended to ensure that climate and nature-related risks are adequately taken into account in the financial system.

f) Further developing instruments for mobilising private-sector funds

Mobilising private-sector funds to finance the sustainable development, climate and biodiversity goals is an important concern for Germany. The German Government is keen to further develop existing instruments, particularly with regard to scalability, as well as to examine new approaches, including risk-mitigating instruments for leveraging private-sector investment, which, however, must be designed to ensure appropriate risk-sharing between public budgets and private-sector investors. Furthermore, in order to boost the mobilisation of the private sector in developing countries and emerging economies, the German Government will examine ways of improving the global conditions for investment. In this context, the German Government is working, inter alia, to promote standardisation in the blended finance sector (including uniform reporting) at international level.

g) Remaining a reliable partner – using multilateral forums

Germany will continue to be a reliable partner in international development and climate finance by adhering to its funding commitments. In addition, multilateral forums and formats are to be used to further advance the reform of the international financial architecture. These include the Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC), the UN Summit of the Future, the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, as well as the G7, G20 and OECD forums.

4. Spillover effects

German action within the context of the financing lever has various effects on other countries, not only in Europe but also beyond. Therefore, positive spillover effects should be taken into consideration and possible negative effects avoided.

Stability-oriented financial policy is an important anchor in Europe and of great relevance to the monetary union in particular. Germany is one of the few countries in the EU to have an AAA rating and therefore plays a key role in the EU's overall credit standing. Effective European fiscal rules reduce the risk of negative spillover effects caused by financial measures taken by other member states. At the same time, investment incentives included in the new EU fiscal rules promote positive spillovers.

With its stability-oriented financial policy and good framework conditions for sustainable finance, the German Government provides companies and players in the financial market with security and clear guiding

principles for (sustainable) investment decisions. Capital and investment can thus flow in a more targeted manner into ecologically and socially relevant activities. This can also have an impact on investment decisions abroad, thus generating positive effects on the economy and sustainable development.

It should be noted that private-sector financing, for example of security goods or fossil fuels, is still necessary in the transition phase, in line with the decisions of COP26, COP27 and COP28 (“keeping the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C within reach”) and Article 2 (1) (c) of the Paris Agreement (“making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development”). The German Government is also in favour of this, partly in view of limited public funds.

The German Government will live up to the commitment made in Glasgow in the COP26 statement on Public Support for the Clean Energy Transition, in line with the G7 decisions (cf. [Annex 2 of the Strategy on Climate Foreign Policy](#)), to end public international funding for unabated fossil fuels without carbon capture and storage from the beginning of 2023, subject to limited, clearly defined exceptions in accordance with the 1.5°C limit. The G7 agreement will permit limited exceptions in accordance with the Paris Agreement and the 1.5°C limit. The German Government is continuously assessing how exemptions should be defined, taking into account energy policy challenges, including those resulting from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as compliance with the Paris Agreement and the 1.5°C pathway.

German development cooperation is aligned with the 2030 Agenda in order to support developing countries and emerging economies in achieving the SDGs through targeted and partnership-based cooperation. In addition to existing instruments for improving an outcome-driven approach in German development cooperation, the transparency of federal spending for partner countries in development cooperation can also be improved by linking budget titles with SDGs.

The German Government’s involvement in the EU and in international working groups has also led, among other things, to the anchoring of climate-related aspects in financial policy, the establishment of sustainable finance approaches in partner countries, the embedding of sustainability in financial market reforms and the practices of financial market players, as well as the development of suitable financing instruments abroad. This creates positive spillover effects that contribute towards achieving SDGs in partner countries.

IV. Research, innovation and digitalisation

Research and innovation are part of SDG 9 – industry, innovation and infrastructure – but also represent a key lever which facilitates and makes possible the achievement of many other SDGs. For example, the German Government is funding research on the connection between biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15) and human health (SDG 3).

On the road to sustainable development with research, innovation and digitalisation

Digitalisation has significantly transformed our world in recent decades and is increasingly shaping all areas of our lives. This comprehensive change relates to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of society, the economy and personal interactions. The growing utilisation of digitalisation represents both an opportunity and a challenge when it comes to protecting the climate and conserving resources. While the smart management of devices, facilities, processes and networks makes a significant contribution towards saving energy in many areas, the continued spread of information and communication technology (ICT) is further increasing the consumption of energy and resources.

1. Aim

a) Research and innovation

Research, science and sustainability are linked by the goal of securing a liveable and progressively forward-looking future for society and everyone living in it. The transformation towards sustainability is an opportunity for innovation and progress.

At the same time, the potential offered by innovation and progress is to be geared to an even greater extent towards sustainability. The goal is scalable and marketable innovations for greater sustainability, which in turn result in new products, services and jobs. The German Government’s research and innovation policy is based on a holistic understanding of innovation. It encompasses a wide range of innovations, such as technological innovations, new business models and social innovations.

Research and innovation funding at federal level must be aligned even more specifically with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, also in order to live up to our responsibility towards future generations as well as global responsibility. Since the Industrial Revolution, inventive genius has impressively demonstrated time and again that disruptive innovations can change the face of the world. At the same time, inventions can also have negative effects on society,

nature, the environment and the climate. It is of key importance to uphold the precautionary principle when drawing up policies, observe protection standards and adapt to changing conditions that take into account possible positive and negative effects.

Council for Sustainable Development, It's the politics, stupid: The Responsibility of State and Society for Sustainable Living Environments, p. 3:

“Technical innovation is necessary, but not enough. In order for us as a society to operate within the limits of what our planet can sustain, it is essential that we significantly reduce our use of resources. This calls for changes in many areas of our current economic structures.”

Council for Sustainable Development

Universities and non-university research institutions, which have facilities for innovation transfer, professional science communication and co-creative knowledge production, contribute significantly towards the success of Germany's research and innovation capacities and towards mastering the sustainability transformation. A large number of other research institutes (e.g. Ecornet institutes), which often work in a transdisciplinary manner, also play a role in this.

b) Digital revolution and innovation

Digitalisation plays a crucial role on the road to sustainability. Our environmental footprint can be reduced by replacing traditional, resource-intensive processes with digital alternatives. For example, the increased use of digital documents minimises the need for paper and thus the demand for wood, which is a limited resource. Virtual meetings and workflows help reduce travel and thus CO₂ emissions. However, the potential has not yet been fully exploited and the German Government believes it has a responsibility to do more to promote the positive environmental impact of digitalisation.

In addition, digitalisation makes possible, for example, the introduction of technologies that optimise energy consumption and reduce resource consumption. Digital technologies thus facilitate a comprehensive transformation of our economy and the introduction of a genuine circular economy. What is more, the development of sustainable technologies, such as renewable energies and environmentally friendly production methods, is being driven forward by digitalisation.

Data (including big data) and artificial intelligence (AI) are playing an increasingly important role in these processes. Data are at the heart of the digital and ecological transformation of society, business, science and the public sector. In addition to the use of data for research and development

purposes, their use in public administration, as well as for sound, efficient and targeted government action, can make a significant contribution towards sustainable development.

As one of the most important key technologies, AI is increasingly penetrating all areas of the economy and society and will therefore have a significant impact on the implementation of the SDGs. According to studies, AI can make a positive contribution towards achieving 134 of the 169 SDG targets, but can also hinder the achievement of 59 targets (Vinuesa et al., 2020). Good and innovation-friendly conditions are therefore necessary for the development and responsible use of AI.

c) Sustainable digitalisation

The downside of the digital transformation is the growing demand for energy and resources. This is not just about energy resources, but also about raw material resources, such as climate-damaging refrigerants for cooling the necessary hardware. In addition, digitalisation has downstream negative effects on the climate and environment due to the generation of new, intensified consumption patterns among consumers in the platform economy, such as the increasing amount of packaging waste in e-commerce.

The growing number of networked devices, data centres and digital infrastructure requires a considerable amount of energy and space. In the case of networked devices, the discontinuation of updates, cloud dependencies and unsustainable software can mean that hardware that is still functional has to be disposed of (software-related obsolescence). What is more, the share of networked devices is increasing every year, and with it the volume of electronic waste. Moreover, the production of electronic devices, from smartphones to servers, requires considerable quantities of raw materials.

In the field of AI, new research and applications are increasingly focused on foundation models, which are larger and more resource-intensive than smaller systems. They are now being used in many areas of the economy and society, and the ever-faster spread of generative AI is also increasing the demand for energy and resources. Furthermore, inefficient software leads to greater consumption of energy and hardware resources.

It is crucial to note that digitalisation not only brings opportunities, but also responsibilities. Therefore, there must be even greater focus on digitalisation as a means of accelerating the transformation towards sustainability. The development and promotion of energy-efficient technologies, the use of renewable energy sources for digital operations and the promotion of recycling and circular economy approaches are decisive steps towards minimising the consumption of en-

ergy and resources. At the same time, downstream effects such as new, intensified consumption patterns must also be taken into account.

What is more, shaping digitalisation in a sustainable manner is also aligned with social goals (such as an inclusive, participatory and human-centric digital transformation that is oriented towards the common good and takes into account human, civil and consumer rights, fair production conditions for hardware, etc.) and economic goals (such as reducing market concentrations in digital markets and protection against cybercrime).

2. Measures taken

a) Sustainable research and innovation

The global challenges, in particular the sustainability, climate and biodiversity goals, harbour enormous potential for innovation. With the Future Research and Innovation Strategy published in 2023, the German Government has placed key transformation tasks at the centre of its research and innovation funding: the topics of the six missions of the Future Strategy encompass climate action, biodiversity, health and food security, the circular economy, sustainable mobility and sustainable cities as well as social cohesion. Through these missions, research and innovation funding provides important impetus to drive forward the transformation to a sustainable society.

The activities initiated within the context of the Research for Sustainability (FONA) strategy, which was devised by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, are also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. FONA forms the umbrella for research and innovation activities in areas such as hydrogen, the defossilisation of industry, the circular economy, bioeconomy, biodiversity conservation, climate action and adaptation, urban development and sustainable use of the oceans. Around a dozen funding measures were launched in 2024. FONA has led to new solutions that help, for example, to align value chains to conserve resources, reconcile biodiversity conservation and land use or strengthen cities as transformation centres and prepare them for climate change.

The strength of the research and innovation lever becomes particularly clear when you look at the thematic breadth of research activities geared towards sustainability and the links established between SDGs. The majority of all technical innovations depend directly or indirectly on the properties of the materials used. Sustainable material innovations, such as those promoted within the framework of the MaterialNeutral initiative, offer great potential for carrying out industrial processes at all levels of the value chain more effectively while

reducing the use of resources (SDGs 9 and 12), conserving material and energy resources and reducing pollution (SDG 13). Furthermore, federal research funding in the area of One Health can promote understanding of the connections between human, animal and environmental health. As part of the long-term research initiative concerning the conservation of biodiversity, funding has been provided since 2023, for example, for research on the relationship between biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15) and human health (SDG 3), as well as research on the use of AI and digitalisation to better understand the complexities of biodiversity in order to advance species conservation (SDGs 14 and 15).

The establishment of the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) and the MaterialDigital platform (PMD) is aimed at improving access to and the (re)use of research data for knowledge gain and innovation. Several NFDI consortiums are working in the area of sustainability, such as DataPLANT (basic plant research), NFDI4BioDiversity (biodiversity, ecology and environmental data), FAIRagro (agrosystems research), NFDI4Earth (earth systems research) and NFDI4Energy (energy systems research). NFDI and PMD provide researchers with newly developed advisory and other services, guidelines and training courses in relation to research data management and work on and with data.

The German Government sees gender equality and diversity in all their dimensions as quality criteria and competitive factors in the scientific system. With the Programme for Women Professors 2030, the Federation and *Länder* are promoting a change of culture in science and research in terms of gender equality. Top female scientists are important role models for young women and girls. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research therefore promotes the visibility of female scientists and their achievements through the funding directive “Spotlight on Innovative Women”.

b) Sustainable digitalisation

Sustainable digitalisation must always be considered from two angles and the necessary framework created accordingly:

(1) Sustainability through digitalisation

The Digital Strategy adopted on 31 August 2022 is this Government’s digital policy roadmap. It brings together under one roof the political priorities and goals of all ministries in the cross-cutting sphere of digitalisation. The Digital Strategy prioritises projects whose implementation is expected to have the greatest leverage effect. This includes the availability of data and data tools, modern registers as well as uniform international technical norms and standards. In addition, 19 major projects are being considered, which are to be implemented by the end of the legislative term at the latest. One aim of all these projects is to consistently mainstream sustainability aspects.

Within the context of the AI Strategy and its updating, the German Government is committed to the targeted use of AI to achieve the SDGs and to the development and shaping of AI in line with the SDGs. This includes funding measures for the research and development of resource-efficient AI as well as the use of AI and data-driven approaches in areas such as the circular economy, climate research and health. In this context, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's funding measures AI Application Hub on Plastic Packaging and Digital GreenTech, for example, provide practical digital tools for conserving resources and protecting the environment.

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection has developed a catalogue of measures for different target groups with the five-point programme "Artificial Intelligence in Support of the Environment and Climate". It includes the funding initiative "AI lighthouse projects", which has already launched more than 50 projects developing pioneering AI applications in the sphere of environmental protection.

Furthermore, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection is working within the framework of the National Circular Economy Strategy (NCES) on, among other things, concepts to facilitate sustainable consumer behaviour through digital tools. This is the focus of the project "Conceptualising and planning digital solutions to promote sustainable consumption for a circular economy (Digikon)"

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action is supporting the development of data ecosystems for industry within the framework of the initiative Manufacturing-X. The aim is to make data available and transparent throughout industrial supply chains, for example as regards the CO₂ footprint or the circular economy (circularity as a service).

With the PMD as the core of the MaterialDigital initiative (www.materialdigital.de), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is promoting standardised solutions for the digital handling of materials in industry. This encompasses the digital description of materials, including associated processes and devices, using what is known as ontologies. This provides a machine-readable presentation for the collation and maintenance of important information about materials.

The aim is to operate the PMD on a long-term basis in an open, international platform that ensures compatibility and can be expanded, and in which data on materials will be stored in a machine-readable and interoperable manner in the future. With the Start-up Strategy drawn up in 2022 under the auspices of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, the German Government is strengthening

the start-up ecosystem in Germany and Europe. With their innovative business models, start-ups can help master the digital transformation. An unprecedented 35% of start-ups are working on innovations in the field of sustainability.

Digitalisation also plays a major role in making our agriculture and rural areas sustainable. Our wide range of food products and renewable raw materials, as well as most renewable energy, are produced in rural areas. Digital technologies can improve animal welfare, as well as make agriculture more resource-saving and efficient, and thus more resilient. In this way, they help to secure our livelihoods and the foundations for the future of our economy. They support us in improving consumer health protection and animal health, thereby making a major contribution towards greater food safety. The opportunities offered by digital technology boost rural areas economically and make them more attractive to live in. This fosters the convergence of living standards throughout the country. Essential prerequisites for this are efficient digital infrastructure for the public, businesses and the public administration, as well as a better transfer of information and ideas.

With 29 centres in the Mittelstand-Digital network, the German Government raises awareness among mid-size companies throughout Germany, especially SMEs, skilled crafts firms and start-ups, about all aspects of sustainable digitalisation, providing them with information and training sessions. Companies are empowered to position themselves sustainably for the future and thus secure their long-term competitiveness.

With the mFUND funding directive, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport is promoting research and innovation to develop digital solutions, applications and processes having a positive impact on Germany's sustainability goals.

In projects financed through mFund – such as EmBaLu, KoFeMo or RAMUS – there is a special focus on monitoring and improving environmental data.

Another important focus of the funding is innovative applications in the field of air mobility using unmanned aviation.

Applications for unmanned aircraft systems are expected to reduce the emissions of air pollutants, for instance in relation to structural inspections (e.g. on railway lines), pollutant monitoring, logistics or medical purposes, as well as the safe and rapid transportation of emergency medical personnel. Here, special applications can help alleviate the pressure on more emission-intensive air and ground transport. EULE, FlowPro, MEDinTime and Liefermichel, all projects funded by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport, are illustrative examples of this.

(2) Sustainability in digitalisation

Modern fibre optic networks create the basis for economic and social participation. They are necessary to ensure that Germany's digital transformation succeeds across the board, also in terms of sustainable economic and social development.

Within the framework of the Gigabit Strategy, the German Government has therefore formulated the goal of widely expanding modern gigabit infrastructure (latest-generation fibre optic and mobile communications) by 2030 and creating the appropriate framework conditions. Energy-intensive copper networks are already being replaced by much more efficient technologies such as fibre optic and 5G.

Modern cable-laying methods, such as trenching, ploughing or milling, help to ensure that broadband expansion is faster, more resource-efficient and more environmentally friendly.

Digital technologies and business models based on them are important enablers for the social-ecological market economy. With the GreenTech Innovation Competition, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action wants to strengthen Germany and Europe as a high-tech location for digital technologies and business models based on them, and make an important contribution towards the SDGs.

With the "greenpower4tower" sustainability competition for mobile communications, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport and the Mobilfunkinfrastrukturgesellschaft mbH (MIG) are looking for innovative energy supply solutions. The aim of this competition of ideas is to identify and test innovative local and CO₂-neutral energy supply systems for remote mobile communication locations that are particularly difficult and expensive to develop for productive operation. In the next step, the most promising concepts will have the chance to be implemented on a pilot basis.

Within the framework of the IPCEI (Important Project of Common European Interest) Next Generation Cloud Infrastructure and Services, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action is promoting CO₂-reducing technologies and sustainable applications in the sphere of cloud and edge computing. Among other things, the operation of edge nodes in solar and wind farms is being promoted, as is the use of waste heat. In the field of sustainable digitalisation, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has launched measures for energy-efficient and resource-saving technological solutions with the Green ICT research initiative. Key elements are the focus on social and economic needs and the greatest possible leverage effect. The initiative focuses on holistic approaches in various areas, such as data processing (edge instead of cloud, smart data instead of big data), data centres (more bits instead of more watts) and efficient communication networks. Three winning projects emerged from

the Green ICT innovation competition, which will explore new approaches in electronics for energy-efficient communication technology until 2025. The Green HPC measure focuses on improving high-performance computing centres at universities and research institutions, as well as commercial data centres. In order to create a central point of contact for green ICT, a Green ICT competence centre was set up at the Research Fab Microelectronics Germany (FMD).

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection has devised another initiative, the German Government's Green IT Initiative, whose aim is to offer solutions to the federal administration to reduce energy consumption caused by ICT and implement environmentally friendly practices in data centres. Energy consumption has been reduced since 2008, despite major increases in the performance of federal IT systems. Another aim of this initiative is to reduce the annual energy consumption of federal IT systems to below 350 GWh. The IT Council has decided to extend this initiative until 2027 in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Compliance with the Blue Angel criteria in all main federal data centres
2. Consistent use of the most environmentally friendly IT products and services
3. Focus on qualitative aspects for the development of environmentally sound IT by overhauling the reporting system

Sustainability in digitalisation also includes the regulation of AI systems at EU level, especially with regard to SDGs 5 (gender equality) and 10 (less inequality). The EU law laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act, AI Act) serves this purpose. It is intended to promote the introduction of human-centred and trustworthy AI while ensuring a high level of protection of health, safety and the environment from the harmful effects of AI systems. This concerns, among other things, the risk of discrimination and unfair disadvantages, for example through scoring systems or in the context of credit checks.

Furthermore, various measures will strengthen civil society's involvement in shaping the framework conditions for digitalisation. One example is the DIN Consumer Council, which represents consumer interests in standardisation processes of relevance to consumers, including in the area of AI and digitalisation. With the initiative Civic Coding – Innovation Network AI for the Common Good, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth are strengthening data and AI

literacy in civil society, pooling funding programmes and support measures, providing support for the implementation of digital projects and promoting social, participatory and sustainable technology.

The German Government is also committed to sustainable digitalisation at international level: the German Environment Agency, together with UNDP, UNEP, Future Earth and other international actors, launched the CODES initiative (Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability) to bring together the scientific community, government and UN organisations, tech companies and civil society. Mandated by the UN Secretary-General, the CODES initiative focuses on promoting digital ecological sustainability. The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is implementing a series of measures that promote the twin green and digital transition in the partner countries of German development cooperation. Together with multilateral partners such as the World Bank and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), it is developing a framework for sustainable digital infrastructure and is piloting digital approaches to climate action and adaptation. In addition, the Ministry is working with the European Commission and other European partners to promote digital green innovations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. Next steps

In order to strengthen the leverage effect of research and innovation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, systemic and mission-oriented approaches are increasingly being used in research and innovation policy. In a systemic approach, economic, environmental and social interests can be brought into line with the SDGs as a guideline and cross-cutting issue, thus enhancing synergies and mitigating conflicting objectives as far as possible. In line with the Future Research and Innovation Strategy, interministerial mission teams are coordinating the implementation of the six missions. In these six missions, the goal is to link research and innovation policy more effectively to other policy areas and to focus action more efficiently. A first implementation tool will be the Mat4Twin programme on materials research, which supports the transformation of industry and society through green and digital material innovations.

We need to accelerate the transformation towards sustainability. The German Government will therefore increase the agility of its innovation policy and improve the promotion of transfers. To this end, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work is to be strengthened and innovation-friendly conditions for regulatory sandboxes are to be created that allow new scope for testing innovations. The flexibilisation of the Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation (SPRIND) through the SPRIND Freedom Act and the establishment of the German

Agency for Transfer and Innovation (DATI) contribute towards the rapid application of research results and thus towards accelerating the development of innovative solutions for the challenges facing society, especially the transformation towards sustainability. The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action's innovation funding programmes for innovative SMEs, which are based on an overarching "from the idea to market success" approach, are open to all fields and based on a bottom-up method. The different challenges facing SMEs in the various phases of the innovation process are being addressed. The task of the Competence Center for Innovative Procurement (KOINNO) is to promote the focus on innovation in public procurement and to advise public authorities.

Quote from the online participation process:

"One step further, research (projects) funded by Germany should in general have a stronger focus on gender, intersectionality and power dynamics. These are highly relevant in global sustainability research contexts but often disregarded. In addition, research, including calls for proposals, should address the gendered dimension and implications of sustainable production and consumption patterns. Where applicable, research should address the potential or existing differentiated impacts of technologies and practices with a view to reduce inequalities and achieve more societal justice."

Sandra Bonn, noting: "This is a contribution from discussions of a workshop with international researchers in the field of sustainability science."

a) Energy research

Energy research, which was addressed by the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development in its decision of 24 July 2024 on the research, innovation and digitalisation levers, plays a key role in the energy transition. After all, an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply is the basis for climate neutrality and a circular economy in all sectors, and ultimately for a future worth living in. To get there, a broad-based and long-term focus of energy research is required, which enables innovations to meet medium and long-term objectives.

In order to achieve the goals of the energy transition, the research and development of green hydrogen production technologies in Germany are to be pursued in a manner that is sustainable, climate-friendly and open to all technologies. With the aim of rapidly developing and ramping up the hydrogen market, and as stated in the National Hydrogen Strategy, other hydrogen colours, in particular low-carbon hydrogen from waste or natural gas in conjunction with

CCS/CCU, will also be utilised in the transition period until sufficient green hydrogen is available. The expected demand is to be covered in this way, particularly in the transformation phase, and the technological switch to hydrogen made possible. The German Government aims to ensure a reliable supply of green hydrogen for Germany which is sustainable in the long term (see also the [National Hydrogen Strategy Update of 2023](#)).

In order to achieve the climate targets for 2030, 2040 and 2045, significant contributions from the field of applied energy research are expected in the near future. Research efforts in this area will have to be focused on practical application – in particular on system integration and the further development of technologies available in the short term, as well as the sustainable digitalisation of the energy system. In the context of a secure and reliable energy supply for Germany, sufficiency strategies and the avoidance of rebound effects must also be considered and factored into research, innovation and transfer. The considerable material demands of the energy transition underline the need for resource efficiency and the transition to a circular economy in order to strengthen resilience and reduce dependencies.

b) Sustainable digitalisation

In order to be able to successfully and sustainably shape digitalisation projects, the German Government is reviewing the recruitment requirements and salary brackets of IT professionals and is adapting them to market conditions.

During the Digital Summit in 2023, the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport published a meta-study conducted by the Wissenschaftliches Institut für Infrastruktur und Kommunikationsdienste (WIK) and key points that serve as a basis for discussing the development of recommendations for action for the sustainable expansion of the gigabit network. Together with the relevant players, the key points are now being further developed into recommendations for action. The consultation deadline is early 2024.

Within the framework of international processes such as the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the German Government is committed to shaping the digital transformation in a sustainable manner. It is crucial that the GDC promotes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and addresses the opportunities and risks of digital transformation for biodiversity, environmental protection and climate action, as well as social and economic goals. The multi-stakeholder approach is key to this.

In order to ensure digital sovereignty and guarantee sustainable digitalisation, the German Government is planning to build its own cloud. The cloud solution should be designed in such a way that a secure and resource-efficient use of AI in public administration can be ensured.

4. Spillover effects

In the field of research and innovation, no spillover effects on the ability of other countries to reach the SDGs have been pointed out (Source: Sustainable Development Report 2023). There is a huge research spending gap between high-income countries on the one hand and middle-income and low-income countries on the other. In the field of research funding, a causal impact assessment of research funding is very challenging due to the non-linear innovation processes. This also applies to measuring spillover effects. It is very likely that research activities and innovation can affect other countries' ability to reach the SDGs. Depending on how the respective innovations are used, positive and negative effects are conceivable. This is why long-term cooperation and close dialogue with international stakeholders from partner countries – especially from low-income countries – are very important.

Understanding and taking into account the negative and positive effects of innovation at an early stage means being able to shape politics accordingly. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research pursues this goal with its innovation impact assessment, for example through the INSIGHT funding directive. With the innovation areas of hydrogen, digital education and social innovation, the focus was on a number of issues which have an impact on SDGs in the funding period 2021–24.

As part of the Future Research and Innovation Strategy, the German Government is focusing its research and innovation policy on the pressing challenges of our time. The research results and innovation arising from this can produce positive spillover effects. Through application and transfer, the positive spillover effects of technological progress and innovations, for example in the field of renewable energies, also benefit other countries.

We must avoid unintended outflows of research and development results that can affect the technological sovereignty of Germany and Europe.

When engaging in international cooperation in the field of science and research, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is working in a spirit of partnership to ensure that the needs of all partners involved are taken into account, that all countries benefit from the research activities and that no new dependencies arise. For example, in Southern (SASSCAL) and Western (WASCAL) Africa, the Federal Education Ministry supports research on climate action and adaptation in long-standing partnerships.

In the field of digitalisation as well, no spillover effects have been identified to date. By implementing the Digital Strategy, the German Government is enhancing the importance of impact assessment in the implementation of digital projects in the public administration. The EVALUATE project initiated by the digital-political think tank Agora Digitale Transformation (ADT) and funded by the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport provides the necessary expertise.

V. International responsibility and cooperation

1. Introduction

Although all nations are called upon to make ambitious national contributions, sustainable development cannot be achieved solely within national borders. Many of the challenges of our time transcend borders. The complex nature of global challenges such as the climate crisis, the loss of biodiversity, pollution, increasing inequality and violent conflicts requires coordinated international cooperation. As a key international player and committed member of the United Nations, Germany is working at international level to implement the 2030 Agenda and, to this end, is strengthening its global partnerships.

In addition to the six areas of transformation, the German Government has also formed a transformation team for the international responsibility and cooperation lever. The transformation report prepared by the team was adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 17 July 2023 (Bundestag printed paper no. 20/77990⁷).

Together with global partners, the German Government is pushing for a global structural policy that promotes a socially just and environmentally sound sustainability transformation. At the same time, all transformation teams are focusing on the international and European dimensions of their issues.

2. Action in Germany: Considering global connections

a) Aims and examples of measures

In order to harmonise national objectives with the 2030 Agenda and key international agreements with each other, a coordinated and science-based approach is required. Key

agreements in this context include the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the UN Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement.

Protecting our natural heritage, promoting human rights and reducing global inequalities are closely interlinked. They are essential in order to achieve all SDGs. Shouldering global responsibility also means paying greater attention to the global impact of national actions. We must avoid or minimise as far as possible negative spillover effects, that is to say the negative impact of our trade, production and consumption patterns and financial markets on other countries. The German Government wants to shape every policy from the outset with a view to ensuring that it is of benefit not only within Germany, but also has a positive impact at global level. Precise and comprehensive impact assessments as well as sound data sources are essential in order to identify potentially conflicting objectives and to take appropriate countermeasures in good time.

The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG), which entered into force in January 2023, is an important instrument which the German Government uses to address spillover effects. It obliges companies to comply with human rights and environmental due diligence obligations along supply chains in Germany and abroad. Other political approaches, such as supporting the development of sustainable agricultural and food systems or building a sustainable circular economy along global supply chains with the right to repair, are also suitable tools for minimising negative impacts on other countries. For example, the National Circular Economy Strategy is intended, among other things, to close material cycles and thereby reduce primary resource consumption, which often cannot be achieved by Germany itself.

The National Water Strategy provides a framework for modern, sustainable water management in Germany, but at the same time sets out goals for how we can work together to sustainably protect global water resources.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“Moreover, peer learning formats should be increasingly implemented with national and international stakeholders from science, the world of politics, society and business, also in order to take into account the perspectives of the stakeholders and countries affected by spillover effects throughout the process of devising measures to reduce such effects.”

Tabea Waltenberg, SDSN Germany

Transformation processes themselves can trigger potentially negative spillover effects and foment poverty and inequality. For instance, the energy transition comes with a significant increase in the demand for certain raw materials, e.g. water in mining and processing methods, copper for the expansion of power grids, as well as lithium and cobalt for electric mobility. Consequently, the German Government supports both the sustainable extraction and processing of raw materials and circular economy approaches in partner countries. Environmental, social and human rights aspects are taken into account. Positive effects can be increased by creating fair working conditions or by strengthening sustainable production chains. One example of this is support for partner countries in the green hydrogen market ramp-up.

The 2030 Agenda is founded on social engagement at all levels. The broad-based participation of civil society, especially young people, is necessary in order to anchor the Sustainable Development Goals in a vibrant democracy. In addition, civil-society engagement around the world is crucial for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The German Government therefore continues to focus on strengthening civil society both in Germany and in partner countries, supporting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and fostering mutual exchange. The German Government is actively working at international level to combat the restrictions on the scope of civil-society action (“shrinking spaces”).

The SDGs can only be achieved if municipalities and *Länder* are involved in their implementation. For this reason, the German Government is supporting the municipal level, among other things in drawing up local sustainability strategies and voluntary sustainability reports, known as voluntary local reviews (VLRs). In addition, municipal partnerships that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals through joint projects are being promoted (cf. [chapter C.II](#)). Furthermore, business is an important partner in the sustainability transformation – also in view of the huge need for investment when it comes to implementing the SDGs. By funding the Partnerships 2030 programme, the German Government is promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships between state, civil-society, private-sector and scientific players in a targeted fashion.

The promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), particularly taking into account the global perspective (Global Learning), is also crucial. That applies likewise to cultural relations and education policy. Education for Sustainable Development and Global Learning empower people to think and act in a forward-looking manner and enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of their own actions on the world. Civil-society stakeholders can thus participate in the necessary transformation processes.

What is more, Education for Sustainable Development greatly increases acceptance of a comprehensive sustainability transformation.

Higher education is best placed both for Education for Sustainable Development and for Global Learning, as research knows no geographical or cultural boundaries per se and therefore always has an international, intercultural and intersectional perspective. Cooperation among universities around the world, student exchanges and international teaching and research projects are an important basis for understanding, mutual knowledge transfers and co-creative knowledge gain, which are indispensable at a time of complex global crises.

b) Selected initiatives with particular transformation potential

In order to accelerate sustainable development, the German Government is driving forward, among other things, the following initiatives with particular transformation potential:

- We have stepped up our efforts to address and systematically counteract negative impacts on the achievement of SDGs in third countries (spillover effects) emanating from Germany. A follow-up process will continue to address all areas of transformation across several levers, a process which began with the German Sustainable Development Strategy of 2024. This will take up proposals from the dialogue process on the German Sustainable Development Strategy in order to deal with spillover effects even more systematically and in a more targeted manner.
- We support global agendas to avoid negative spillover effects. One example of this is the implementation of the Two-Pillar Solution for the taxation of international corporations, in particular the global minimum effective taxation, and support for developing countries in its introduction.
- We review how and where public administration practices and procedures can minimise unintended impacts on third countries. For example, shaping public procurement in a sustainable manner is a key starting point for this, particularly with regard to the inclusion of environmental, social and human rights standards.
- The sustainability impact assessment of measures, laws and strategies, subsidies, green federal bonds or the federal budget is to be oriented also in the future towards the holistic approach of the 2030 Agenda,

taking into account the interconnections between the SDGs and effects on third countries. With this in mind, the sustainability impact assessment of laws will be revised on the basis of the recommendations adopted by the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development in November 2022, in particular with regard to the use of the electronic sustainability assessment tool "eNAP".

- The German Government supports development policy education programmes in Germany and is working together with the *Länder* to ensure that Education for Sustainable Development and Global Learning are permanently integrated into the curricula of schools in Germany.
- In keeping with the aim of involving young people in national sustainable development processes as well as at international level, Germany supports the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations.
- As part of the WTO negotiations on the abolition of harmful fisheries subsidies (SDG 14.6), the German Government supported the participation of partner countries in the preliminary negotiations through a WTO fund. In addition, it will contribute up to 2 million euro to the fund to support the implementation of the agreement for developing countries.

3. Driving forward the 2030 Agenda at European and international level

a) Aims and examples of measures

Germany is committed to promoting effective international cooperation for a global sustainability transformation. In an increasingly multipolar world order, Germany is focusing to a greater extent on partnerships with countries in Asia, Africa, South and Central America and the Middle East in addition to European and transatlantic cooperation.

To this end, the German Government is expanding its bilateral and multilateral partnerships in a targeted manner in order to effectively address sustainable-development tasks, such as combating the climate and environmental crisis and its effects, alleviating humanitarian emergencies, strengthening global health, reducing inequalities within and between states and preserving peace and security. Part of this effort is the better dovetailing of the 2030 Agenda with other global processes, such as the Rio Conventions.

United Nations

Since Germany's accession to the United Nations in 1973, its commitment to multilateralism and the principles and objectives of the United Nations have formed important cornerstones of German foreign, security and development policy.

As the second-largest contributor to the UN system, Germany is contributing to its ability to act and, as co-facilitator of the Summit of the Future initiated by the Secretary-General, was committed to reaching a consensus among member states on a Pact for the Future. In 2025, Germany will chair the Peacebuilding Commission, host the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial and the Global Disability Summit in May 2025, nominate the candidate for the office of President of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, champion reform of the Security Council and stand for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 2027/2028.

Today, Germany is a particularly strong advocate of structural reforms of the UN system and the multilateral system as a whole. Not only the UN Security Council, but also the international financial architecture must become more efficient and gain greater legitimacy. The African continent and other regions of the Global South in particular need greater representation in multilateral forums and their capacities need to be enhanced. Germany will continue to work on strengthening the free international order based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and universal human rights.

Germany supports the reform of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to ensure a more coherent and efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Key elements of the reform are better coordination at country level and the implementation of the Funding Compact.

Germany is actively involved in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which is held annually in New York, and is funding the participation of youth and indigenous representatives from the Global South. In addition, Germany has already presented two Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and is planning its third report in 2025. Germany attaches particular importance to a socially inclusive and integrative approach both in the process and in the report, with the participation of stakeholders from civil society, business, the scientific community, the *Länder* and municipalities.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“What is more, it is alarming to see member states making it increasingly difficult for civil-society organisations to participate in the HLPF, for example. But civil society is needed to implement the SDGs. The German Government thus sent a strong message by inviting an unusually large group from civil society to New York with the German delegation.”

Thomas Hohn, Bündnis ZukunftsBildung

In the context of the ECOSOC-HLPF review, Germany is committed to strengthening the HLPF as a central forum for reviewing the progress of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, for example with regard to the participation of civil society or closer integration with the scientific recommendations of the GSDR.

In 2023, the SDG Summit was held at the level of the Heads of State and Government. The focus was on the mid-term review of the 2030 Agenda, in particular with regard to the lack of progress in implementing the SDGs, as well as calls for improved development financing and reform of the international financial architecture.

As requested by the Secretary-General, the German Government presented twelve key contributions to the United Nations in New York ahead of the SDG Summit. The measures proposed by the German Government address key aspects of our international sustainable development policy:

1. Promoting sustainable development financing and World Bank reform
2. Structuring public debt in a sustainable manner
3. Promoting German policies in line with the 2030 Agenda
4. Promoting European policies in line with the 2030 Agenda
5. Promoting climate action and the conservation of biodiversity
6. Promoting feminist development and foreign policy
7. Making the global energy transition socially just and ecologically sound
8. Promoting social justice and the inclusion of people with disabilities around the world

9. Enhancing food security
10. Strengthening healthcare systems and pandemic prevention
11. Reducing the negative impact on third countries
12. Thinking globally, acting locally. Promoting climate-friendly urban development and green infrastructure.

Source: Key contributions of the German Government for the SDG Summit 2023

At the SDG Summit, the 193 member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted a political declaration renewing their commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Reducing the SDG financing gap and reforming the international financial architecture feature prominently in that declaration. Other key points are the reduction of inequalities, the promotion of gender equality, inclusive digitalisation, a sustainable and resilient water and energy supply, as well as support for agricultural, food and health systems. Other UN processes, such as the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) and the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP28), were also addressed.

Against the backdrop of the mutually reinforcing global crises, geopolitical polarisation and the lack of progress on the SDGs, UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented a report entitled “Our Common Agenda” on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, in which he proposed comprehensive reform of the multilateral order. Based on these recommendations, the Summit of the Future took place in New York on 22 and 23 September 2024. The Pact for the Future, which was adopted by consensus, reaffirms the commitment of the UN member states to multilateralism and calls for reforms in key areas of the international order to make multilateralism fit for the future and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda more quickly. In particular, this includes a strengthened role for the United Nations in the field of peace and security, reform of the international financial architecture, digital cooperation and the involvement of young people in United Nations processes. Moreover, multilateral governance is to take into account the interests and needs of future generations. Antje Leendertse, the German Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, and her Namibian colleague, Neville Gertze, led the negotiations on the preparation of the Summit of the Future. The German Government will actively work in the relevant organisations and bodies to implement the Pact for the Future. It is pursuing this aim with the objective of successfully using the Summit of the Future to make multilateralism more efficient, transparent and inclusive.

In addition to the Summit of the Future, the Second World Summit for Social Development will likewise focus on lending momentum to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Thirty years after the first World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, the second Summit will take place in Doha from 4 to 6 November 2025. Its purpose will be to speed up implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to strengthen social development in a sustainable manner, in particular the fight against poverty, productive full employment, decent work for all and social inclusion.

Germany also supports the UN Sustainable Financing for Development process and the ongoing preparations for the Fourth International Financing for Development Conference in 2025. The process addresses the major structural and transformative challenges of our time. It aims to identify systemic solutions to current global crises, including in key areas such as the global debt architecture, international tax cooperation, private-sector mobilisation and the future of international development cooperation.

European Union

The German Government wants the European Commission to declare that the 2030 Agenda is the guiding principle for regulation, policy strategies and programme planning. It believes the Agenda should be taken into account from the outset in all process steps. It is important that this also applies to the future work of the Commission appointed in 2024.

Germany is committed to ensuring that the European Commission now becomes more specific when it formulates and implements its work programme: do the measures contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to the correction of the shortcomings, and if so, to what extent? The implementation of the 2030 Agenda at local level should also continue to play an important role.

The European Commission presented a voluntary report at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2023 reviewing the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda (EU Voluntary Review, EU-VR). In this report, it affirms its commitment to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It states that all European Union measures and strategies are to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. The European Union is striving for a high level of ambition by adopting far-reaching transformative policies and strategies. The European Green Deal, which is inextricably linked to SDG implementation, serves as a guideline here.

It is to be welcomed that the European Commission is continuing to build on the European Green Deal and to maintain its commitment to achieving its objectives. With the Green Deal, the European Union aims to promote the global transformation towards a sustainable and peaceful world and

to successfully shape the transition to a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. With the announcement of the Clean Industrial Deal and in the context of the Global Gateway infrastructure initiative, attention is also being focused on further priorities. The German Government is committed to the European Union actively implementing and developing the European Green Deal in order to jointly combat the climate and biodiversity crises, environmental pollution and degradation, as well as the loss of natural resources, while at the same time ensuring prosperity for all European citizens through the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Furthermore, it is important to consider the impact of implementing the European Green Deal and other EU policies on partner countries, particularly the least developed countries, and to address this where necessary.

Moreover, as a member state of the European Union, Germany is instrumental in ensuring that further EU measures also make an important contribution to the SDGs. These include the Global Gateway infrastructure initiative, the EU's climate action package Fit for 55, the Farm to Fork Strategy for Sustainable Agriculture and Food, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU Taxonomy, the EU Regulation on nature restoration and the EU forest strategy, the EU Regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR), the EU Circular Economy Action Plan, the NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan, the EU trade strategy, the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), as well as key labour market and social standards.

As a member of the Council Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Germany, together with the other EU member states, regularly monitors and supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all of the EU's internal and external policy areas. Within the working party, Germany supported the European Commission in the preparation of the EU Voluntary Report (EU-VR) and repeatedly called for adequate participation by civil society as well as balanced and differentiated reporting. This commitment is to continue with the preparation of a second EU Voluntary Report by 2030.

European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)

The German Government works closely with the administrations of other European states on sustainable development. It is a member of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN). In this context, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection has been funding and organising an annual conference for European Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development since 2020. The Ministry also supported the structured involvement of youth delegates in the form of a permanent youth network within the ESDN. The aim is to

support the work of the youth delegates and to improve networking among the delegates as well as with representatives of the ESDN.

Engagement at G7 and G20 level

During its G20 Presidency in 2024, Brazil worked to combat extreme inequalities. One focus was the fair organisation of tax systems and global tax cooperation. Today, the ultra-rich often have a significantly lower tax burden than workers with average incomes. An indirect objective is therefore to ensure the effective taxation of wealthy individuals worldwide through closer cooperation and more targeted measures.

Moreover, the German Government supports Brazil's newly founded Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty (GAHP), which spotlights SDGs 1 and 2. The multiple crises of recent years have led to setbacks in the fight against poverty and hunger. Germany therefore stands shoulder to shoulder with Brazil in favour of accelerating the implementation of the SDGs mentioned above, which can have a positive leverage effect on other closely related SDGs.

Germany will also support South Africa during its G20 Presidency in 2025 in order to continue the G20's drive to reduce inequality and fight hunger.

Germany is also committed to generating fresh impetus in the G20 for relevant international negotiations – for example, in the fields of sustainable and equitable development, climate action, biodiversity and environmental protection, the energy transition, food security, water and sanitation, global health, social security, gender equality, etc. Furthermore, Germany wants to see quicker implementation and entry into force of agreements reached.

At G7 level, Germany is working to advance transformative initiatives in line with the 2030 Agenda. During Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022, the G7 members adopted the Berlin Roadmap, which is intended to strengthen cooperation within the G7 on the circular economy and resource efficiency in the coming years and links these issues with climate action for the first time. In 2023 a new work strand was established at, inter alia, Germany's suggestion as part of cooperation within the G7 Alliance for Resource Efficiency with the aim of accelerating the establishment of a circular economy and resource efficiency to foster climate action and the protection of biodiversity in the G7 (cf. [chapter B.III.](#)).

Sustainable development financing

In 2023, the OECD put the SDG financing gap in developing countries and emerging economies alone at 3.9 trillion US dollars per year until 2030. The gap has continued to grow in recent years, particularly in countries of the Global South, due to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and a debt situation that has been significantly exacerbated by, inter alia,

the global reversal in interest rates. It is due, among other things, to significant financing requirements in order to overcome current challenges ranging from climate action and biodiversity conservation to food security and health protection. Within the scope of existing budget funds, the German Government wants to help ensure that this shortfall is made up. Both public and private-sector financial flows should be oriented coherently to the SDGs in order to promote a social-ecological transformation and climate-resilient development internationally (sustainable finance). The central framework here is the multilaterally adopted Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) on financing for sustainable development.

Comment by a representative of civil society at the kick-off conference on the revision of the German Sustainable Development Strategy:

“Reform of the international financial architecture has one of the strongest leverage effects for the SDGs.”

Felix Meyerhoff

Germany is an important player in the UN Financing for Development process. Among other things, Germany has been co-hosting the meetings of the Friends of Monterrey Group, an important informal political forum in the field of sustainable development financing, together with Mexico and Switzerland since 2016.

The German Government welcomed the decision by the UN General Assembly in November 2023 to convene the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville in 2025, and is supporting the ongoing preparatory process. Such a conference is essential in order to review together the progress and challenges of development financing, and offers an opportunity to adapt the development financing agenda to changing needs.

Reforming the international financial architecture is an important lever for closing the SDG financing gap. Due in large part to Germany's initiative, the World Bank Group shareholders agreed on fundamental reform at its annual meeting in October 2023. In future, the World Bank Group's mission, operating model and targets system will focus to a greater extent on the protection and provision of global public goods such as climate action, biodiversity conservation, pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as the promotion of peace and security. The World Bank Group will thus become a genuine bank for transformation. Germany was the very first country to announce that it would offer financial support to a reformed World Bank Group by making available hybrid capital. It is also promoting a corresponding path and reform in the regional development banks. The aim

is to ensure that the multilateral development banks act in a coordinated and thus more effective manner (MDBs as a system).

Quote from the dialogue process:

“In our view, the German Government has to use the Sustainable Development Strategy to promote comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture, which includes an ambitious UN convention on taxation law that covers all countries and prevents cross-border tax violations and tax avoidance by transnational companies and wealthy individuals, and generates more financial resources for countries in the Global South.”

VENRO

Germany advocates the effective implementation and further strengthening of the G20 Common Framework for restructuring the debt of low-income countries and is committed to debt transparency. Moreover, as another development-cooperation instrument, Germany is offering bilateral debt conversions to low- or middle-income countries that are indebted but not over-indebted. This will make it possible to mobilise targeted additional investment for sustainable development and climate action.

Quote from the dialogue process:

“The Global South is disproportionately affected by climate change but produces the lowest emissions. At the same time, many countries are over-indebted and thus unable to invest extensively in measures to foster climate change adaptation. A comprehensive debt relief strategy must provide funding so that people in the regions of the world affected by climate change can also lead lives worth living.”

Caru

Another focus is on promoting sustainable finance in developing countries and emerging economies as part of German development cooperation, in order to contribute towards a social-ecological transformation of the economic and financial systems in those countries, too.

At international level, the German Government also strongly advocates fighting illicit financial flows and is making an important contribution towards the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing within the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), among other things. What is more, Germany is strengthening the capacity of global, regional and national partners to tackle illicit financial flows.

The German Government aims to continue contributing 0.7% of gross national income to official development assistance (ODA ratio) in the coming years.

The question as to how prosperity and economic progress will be defined in future is also important. The international community must go beyond measuring economic growth and, in particular, include natural and social capital. One objective is to make it binding to take into consideration cross-border costs and benefits in future.

b) Selected initiatives with particular transformation potential

In order to advance the 2030 Agenda at European and international level, the German Government, among other things, is promoting the following:

- Germany’s commitment to advocate effective multilateral cooperation and systematic alignment with the 2030 Agenda in all international organisations in which it participates.
- Strengthening global partnerships in an increasingly multipolar world. Working to strengthen and reform the United Nations as an irreplaceable pillar of a peaceful and just world and as a key player in achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- Further implementing the World Bank Group reform in order to bolster its capacity to support a socially just and ecological transformation. The protection and provision of global public goods are to be systematically integrated into the World Bank’s operating model. Strengthening the entire system of multilateral development banks.
- Supporting the Two-Pillar Solution for the taxation of international corporations.
- Supporting the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025.
- Supporting the effective implementation and further strengthening of the G20 Common Framework for restructuring the debt of low-income countries and advocacy of debt transparency and the OECD Debt Transparency Initiative.
- Bilateral debt conversion through debt-for-SDG swaps.
- Striving to maintain an ODA ratio (share of public development assistance in gross national income) of 0.7% in the coming years.

- Supporting the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda at EU level as a responsible, as well as the largest, member state, with the aim of anchoring the SDGs as a key priority in European policies; inclusion of the 2030 Agenda as a guiding principle in the EU budget; promotion of policy coherence in line with the 2030 Agenda; improvement of the EU's monitoring of SDGs; effective implementation of multilateral sustainable development standards through key EU strategies (including the Global Gateway infrastructure initiative) and in all existing and future trade agreements, as well as efforts to develop a European Commission strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- Strengthening multilateral relations by developing peer-learning and best-practice approaches to initiatives and laws in line with sustainable development policy, such as the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG), the Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity or the National Circular Economy Strategy.
- Creation of new spaces to develop concrete solutions for a social-ecological transformation through global cooperation. With the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, the German Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Michael Otto Foundation and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, brings together key figures from the world of politics, business, science, civil society and international organisations in a high-level format. This enables an exchange in a spirit of mutual trust and partnership between decision-makers from the Global South and the Global North and provides a platform for concrete agreements on advancing global sustainable development.

4. Germany's global responsibility: Foreign-policy, environmental and development cooperation with partner countries

a) Aims and examples of measures

Forming alliances instead of going it alone: establishing partnership models that show the way forward

The host of global challenges can only be tackled through global cooperation and partnership. German development policy, which is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, is a key element here. It has the necessary tools to support far-reaching structural change in the economic, environmental and social spheres at global level, as well as to strengthen our partners' resilience.

Germany focuses on integrated approaches that take all aspects of sustainable development into account, and interlinks bilateral, multilateral and sectoral engagement. Germany is the second-largest bilateral donor in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, the second-largest UN contributor, as well as the largest donor of support for countries taking in refugees.

The aim is to make attractive offers in the field of development policy that are in line with strategies on the partner side – for example, with the African Union's Agenda 2063. Admitting the African Union to the G20 in 2023 was an important step. After all, the African Union represents the interests of some 1.4 billion people. In this context, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) championed by the African Union, which promises great opportunities for economic growth, investment and jobs.

Various factors have led to a loss of confidence in the West on the part of many countries in the Global South. These include shortcomings in multilateral decision-making structures, frustration over unfulfilled pledges by Western countries, for example those concerning climate and development financing, unequal vaccine distribution and production during the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that global trade, production and consumption patterns very often have a detrimental impact on the countries of the Global South.

The German Government is committed to working in partnership with the countries of the Global South, based on respect, reciprocity, shared responsibility as well as common values and goals. Activities must be defined on the basis of exchanges with partners, their interests must be recognised and taken into account, and our own positions must be communicated transparently.

A critical confrontation with Germany's colonial past, including the consequences of the colonial age and our own understanding of development, is one crucial factor for an open dialogue with partner countries. This includes in-depth reflection on whether and to what extent colonial continuities, for instance asymmetric power and dependency structures, exist in relations with our partners and how these can be dismantled through dialogue.

This is an essential prerequisite for a sustainable model of future cooperation which highlights respect and reciprocity.

Germany will continue to support inclusive multilateralism which strengthens the voice of our partner countries in international decision-making processes. One example is the CODES Initiative already described here.

Priorities for Germany's commitment in line with a global structural policy for sustainable development

In order to get back on track with the 2030 Agenda, Germany has set the priorities listed below with the aim of strengthening justice and resilience in and with our partner countries.

A socially just ecological transition is crucial for maintaining our natural heritage and mitigating climate change, as well as adapting to its impact. Germany is working with partner countries around the world to bring about the necessary structural change towards socially just, greenhouse gas-neutral and ecologically compatible societies. Together with our partners, we are shaping processes of change to increase local added value and revenue, align financial flows with the SDGs in a coherent way, create decent jobs and protect our environment.

The framework for this is provided, among other things, by the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Germany is driving forward the implementation of these instruments at international level and is supporting partner countries in developing and implementing relevant strategies, programmes and plans. In view of rising demand as well as global climate and environmental justice, the German Government has continuously increased its contributions to international climate finance. In 2023, it provided some 5.7 billion euro in public climate finance from budgetary funds, including grant elements of KfW development loans. If market resources and privately mobilised funds are added to this, German climate finance in 2023 totals around 9.9 billion euro. With a view to increasing public climate finance from budgetary resources (including grant elements) to 6 billion euro per year, Germany reliably provides its fair share of the pledge made by industrialised countries to mobilise 100 billion US dollars per year for the fight against climate change in developing countries and emerging economies. As part of climate finance, the German Government will increase international biodiversity financing to 1.5 billion euro per year by 2025. Germany is thus sending a strong message about the protection of our natural resources.

The Just Energy Transition Partnerships with South Africa, Indonesia, Viet Nam and Senegal constitute a core element of Germany's efforts to foster global and socially just structural change by adopting integrated approaches. They accelerate the expansion of renewable energies and advance a just energy transition. In addition, a memorandum of understanding was concluded in 2023 between Brazil and Germany on a partnership for a socially just and ecological transformation. With this partnership, the two partners have committed to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and to a socially just and ecologically sound transformation.

The German Government will continue to advocate for a socially just and ecologically sound transition in global sectoral processes.

For example, it will take advantage of the momentum created by the UN Water Conference in 2023 to help partner countries find appropriate solutions to ensure greater water security and to realise the human rights to safe and affordable water and sanitation. To this end, Germany supports, among other things, the UN System-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation, launched during the HLPF in July 2024, SDG 6 monitoring and the new UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Water. The same applies to the forthcoming 2026 UN Water Conference and its preparatory processes, in which stakeholders are to be involved. Germany will also continue to work for safe chemicals management and an ambitious international agreement on plastic. Within the EU, the German Government advocates, among other things, stricter regulations on the use of single-use plastics.

The Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development have developed their own guidelines or strategy on feminist foreign policy and on development policy. Sustainable development can only be achieved if all people are able to participate equally in social, political and economic life. However, people are discriminated against and systematically left behind all over the world, whether it be because of their gender, age, religious affiliation or other grounds of discrimination.

Quote from the dialogue process:

"Especially in the case of gender-specific discrimination in the context of the climate catastrophe, it is essential to learn from international partners. One example of this is the Gender and Climate project funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by WECF, in which partners from Georgia, Uganda and Colombia work together to strengthen the capacities of climate stakeholders and to plan, finance and implement gender-based climate measures. These global partnerships can generate positive spillover effects that contribute towards sustainable development, both at national and international level."

Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)

The feminist foreign and development policies of the Federal Foreign Office and the Development Ministry address structural inequalities and make women and LGBTQIA+ people in all their diversity, as well as marginalised groups, the focus of attention. It is important to take into account

various overlapping and possibly reinforcing reasons for discrimination (intersectional approach). Germany's commitment is based on the three Rs: equal rights, equal access to resources and increased representation in decision-making processes.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Foreign Office aim to increase to 93% the proportion of newly pledged project funding from their respective budgets aimed at promoting gender equality. Some 8% of the funds are to be used in a gender-transformative manner or as the primary objective in line with the OECD DAC code. For the entire German Government, the share of newly pledged project funds from development cooperation that foster gender equality is to rise to 85% by 2030 (indicator 5.1.g). This objective is based on the Gender Action Plan III, which entered into force in 2020 during Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Combating poverty, hunger and inequality is more urgent than ever. It is especially important to reach the most disadvantaged and poverty-stricken people and communities and to reduce inequalities. Leave no one behind – this is the main ambition of the 2030 Agenda and the cross-cutting theme of Germany's commitment worldwide.

Comment by a representative of civil society at the kick-off conference on the revision of the German Sustainable Development Strategy

“Too little attention was paid in the last German Sustainable Development Strategy to helping disadvantaged groups. The 'leave no one behind' principle is important and should be anchored not only in the 2030 Agenda, but also in the indicators of the German Sustainable Development Strategy.”

Dr Gabriele Weigt, Managing Director of bezev

Every individual has the right to equal social, economic and political participation. In order to support and advance the worldwide implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in terms of development policy, Germany is hosting the next Global Disability Summit in Berlin on 2 and 3 April 2025, in cooperation with Jordan and the International Disability Alliance.

The German Government also aims to improve the framework conditions for the protection and integration of refugees and displaced persons around the world. Germany therefore supports the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migration and the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

Germany will continue to support partner countries in developing and expanding social security systems. They are an important lever for combating poverty, hunger and inequality and bolstering social resilience. During Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022, the G7 Development Ministers agreed to support the countries of the Global South, in cooperation with international partner organisations, in giving up to a billion more people access to social protection by 2025. The German Government is therefore committed to further developing international alliances with relevant partners such as the World Bank and United Nations organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In addition to social security, decent employment is an important lever for reducing poverty and inequality. Together with the World Bank and the ILO, Germany has set up an initiative to support the UN Secretary-General's Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. The aim is to support partner countries, through improved international coordination and a coordinated financial architecture, in driving forward the expansion of social security systems to cover 4 billion more people and to create 400 million decent jobs in future-oriented economic and employment sectors in the Global South.

The increasing impact of climate change, violent conflicts, poverty and inequality, as well as the tense situation on global agricultural markets, are hitting marginalised groups around the world particularly hard. In 2023, about 733 million people were affected by chronic hunger. Around 2.8 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2023. The German Government continues to work together with international partners to combat and prevent food crises. In 2022, for example, it launched the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS) in response to the global food crisis. The Alliance's critical tools, such as the Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard and the Preparedness Plans, are being utilised and further developed by other international initiatives and organisations despite the Alliance's termination. In addition, the German Government is promoting the transformation towards sustainable, resilient agricultural and food systems. This includes advancing the implementation of the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit and its follow-up processes.

Health is simultaneously the goal, prerequisite and result of sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic reversed development progress, particularly in the Global South, and highlighted the importance of the prevention or early detection of potential epidemics and pandemics. Most infectious diseases with pandemic potential are zoonoses and vector-borne diseases, i.e. they are closely related to the care and handling of wild and farm animals, as well as the destruction of natural habitats and climate change. Antimicrobial resistance is a problem at the human-animal-environment inter-

face. In order to better prevent future pandemics, it is therefore necessary to achieve a lasting balance between human, animal and environmental health. That is why the German Government is increasingly strengthening the One Health approach at national and international level.

Statement from the dialogue group:

“The food-health-climate-biodiversity nexus is particularly relevant. Targeted investment is needed in integrated programmes for sustainable food systems that promote small farms as well as environmentally sound, socially compatible and climate-friendly approaches. The One Health approach must be implemented.”

Anke Kurat, VENRO

Germany plays a leading role in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, including as a founding member of the Pandemic Fund established by the World Bank in 2022. In addition, the German Government supports the Nature for Health (N4H) multi-partner trust fund, which strengthens the One Health approach and contributes to the prevention of epidemics and pandemics of zoonotic origin.

Efficient, digitalised health systems are a fundamental building block for the economic and social development of any society. Fair access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics, as well as access to healthcare, should be ensured as a lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The German Government is also committed to this in the negotiations for the international pandemic treaty and the successful revision of the International Health Regulations at the WHO in 2024.

Statement from the dialogue group:

“Universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), especially in healthcare facilities and other public institutions such as schools, is a basic prerequisite for health and resilient healthcare systems.”

The aim is to improve pandemic prevention, preparedness and response as well as the necessary national capacities worldwide. Germany also supports the establishment and expansion of its own vaccine and pharmaceutical production in partner countries in order to improve global access to health products.

In times of increased armed conflict and geopolitical upheaval, the relevance of peace and security as a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development becomes particularly clear. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda states that it “seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom”.

The German Government’s crisis management and actions in the sphere of peace policy are based on the Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace published in 2017. These guidelines are being further developed in the course of implementing the National Security Strategy adopted in 2023. In this context, the German Government ensures close dovetailing between humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peace building. It drives forward international processes to systematically implement integrated action in line with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus for all crisis regions in the world.

The German Environment Agency, together with UNDP, UNEP, Future Earth and other international actors, launched the CODES (Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability) initiative to bring together the research community, governmental and UN organisations, tech companies and civil society. Mandated by the UN Secretary-General, the CODES initiative focuses on promoting digital ecological sustainability.

b) Selected measures with particular transformation potential

In order to assume global responsibility in its foreign, environmental and development policy cooperation with partner countries, the German Government is promoting, among other things, the following measures:

- Increasing the share of newly pledged development cooperation project funds of the entire German Government that contribute to gender equality to 85% by 2030. In addition, the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development are setting themselves targets that go beyond that goal (cf. [previous text](#) and newly introduced [indicator 5.1.g](#)).
- Supporting the United Nations Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions with the aim of giving 4 billion people access to social security and creating 400 million decent jobs by 2030. Supporting the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme to the tune of 130 million euro.

- Embedding the Agenda for Decent Work Worldwide in German development cooperation, addressing issues such as living wages, basic and further training and local processing of raw materials to create high-quality jobs.
- Organising the 2025 Global Disability Summit in Berlin.
- Supporting the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the UN Food Systems Summit and its follow-up processes (including national pathways) and international food security initiatives, for example in the context of the G7 or G20.
- Supporting a sustainable transformation of agricultural and food systems with the special initiative Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems, launched by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as the Agricultural Policy Dialogue with the African Union initiated by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture on the key issue of climate-resilient agriculture and food waste.
- Supporting multilateral initiatives and funds to create sustainable agricultural and food systems, such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, the Food Systems 2030 Fund and the 50x2030 Initiative, implemented through a partnership between the World Bank, IFAD and FAO.
- Enhancing pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, including by providing 169 million euro for the Pandemic Fund, and by expanding national vaccine and pharmaceutical production in partner countries. Conducting negotiations on an international pandemic treaty and a revision of the International Health Regulations.
- Increasing Germany's contribution towards international climate finance from budgetary funds (including grant elements) to 6 billion euro annually (this target was reached for the first time in 2022). As part of this, the German Government will increase international biodiversity funding to 1.5 billion euro per year. Germany's commitment to international forest climate finance is to reach 2 billion euro in 2021–2025. This goal has already been achieved.

- Developing and expanding ambitious climate partnerships (JETPs and bilateral Climate and Development Partnerships) with countries of the Global South and ongoing support for the Global Shield against Climate Risks.
- Strengthening partnerships to jointly implement climate, health and biodiversity objectives through a number of international initiatives (for example, on drinking water, sanitation, emission reduction).
- Using the momentum generated by the UN Water Conferences in 2023 and 2026 for the ambitious international implementation of the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda.
- Promoting a socially just transition to renewable energies and supporting measures for the sustainable extraction and processing of raw materials in partner countries. Advancing the Energy Compact initiative.
- Supporting fast-growing cities in the Global South in implementing climate action and adaptation measures that are socially inclusive, contribute towards the conservation of biodiversity and are thus making cities more attractive to live in for all. This includes access to sustainable forms of mobility in cities. In particular, investment will be made possible through the Cities Climate Finance Gap Fund and the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF).

Chapter D. Outlook

The 2030 Agenda marks a milestone in international cooperation and represents a strong commitment to multilateralism. Realising the SDGs contained in the 2030 Agenda remains a mission of the highest priority. It is the key to ensuring that people on this planet have good lives on a durable basis.

Whether the international community manages to maintain its commitment to rigorously implement the 2030 Agenda in the future and beyond 2030 will determine whether politicians will be able to tackle crisis-related developments effectively and as early as possible while upholding the principle of sustainable development – with the spectrum of challenges ranging from climate change, biodiversity loss and resource consumption to social disparities and the goal of achieving the convergence of living standards in all regions of Germany.

Picking up the pace

It remains true that we will only achieve the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda if we make this decade the Decade of Transformation, the Decade of Action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The mid-term review has shown that the pace has to be accelerated even further. Driving forward the transformation in this way and working together to make it fair – this is the task ahead of us.

To an even greater extent, sustainable development policy must become a guiding principle that shapes all areas of policy and current political action.

This requires that policymaking remains consistently oriented towards sustainable development, not only as an overarching guiding principle but, in keeping with the whole-of-government approach, as an effective cross-cutting principle in all policy fields and in the (day-to-day) activities of the public administration.

This is achieved, among other things, by monitoring key policy areas using the Strategy's indicators, objectives and principles, which are incorporated into all laws and regulations via the sustainability impact assessment. In future, the actual achievement of goals and their progress should be depicted in a more focused manner. This is also in keeping with a call from the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development.

Effective interministerial cooperation is needed to anchor sustainable development in all policy areas. The review of the relevant processes already initiated should therefore be continued in the next legislative term. The experience gained so far should be used to make cooperation more efficient.

Lean and efficient processes are necessary to accelerate the pace of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The burden on business and the public administration should be lessened and unnecessary bureaucracy reduced.

At the HLPF in July 2025, the German Government will present its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) which will incorporate the adopted Strategy and upstream processes and contribute towards dovetailing national sustainable development with international processes. With the GSDS, Germany is a role model for other countries and a driving force behind the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and will continue to work within the UN to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda goals. We must shape transformation fairly – together and mindful of our responsibility for Germany and the world.

Sustainable development offers the opportunity to meet Germany's challenges at national, European and international level in future. Even in the face of major challenges at both global and national level, we can jointly transform our society and economy in a just manner in line with the 2030 Agenda if we tackle this task with resolve.

The German Government is living up to this responsibility and calls on everyone to do the same. All stakeholders must play their part in order to take this transformation forward: the state and its institutions, business, the scientific community and civil society. With the consistent and ongoing development of the Strategy, Germany is also sending a clear message to the international community concerning the central importance of the 2030 Agenda. Leave no one behind – this is the main objective of the 2030 Agenda and the cross-cutting theme of Germany’s commitment worldwide.

Overview: Content and steering of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (sustainability management system)

I. Significance, basis and scope of sustainability as a steering instrument

1. **Sustainable development** (sustainability) is the **guiding principle** behind the German Government's policies. As a goal and a yardstick of government action at national, European and international levels, it must be taken into account when it comes to measures in all policy fields, and in any actions taken by the public administration. Earth's planetary boundaries, along with the objective of a life in dignity for all, form the parameters for political decisions.

2. The aim behind **sustainability** is to achieve intergenerational equity, social cohesion and quality of life, and to assume international responsibility. In this context, economic performance, the protection of our living environment and social responsibility should be combined to ensure that developments are sustainable in the long term.

3. **The German Sustainable Development Strategy** is the 2002 Strategy (National Sustainable Development Strategy) in its revised version published in 2025 with amendments from the Policy Decision of November 2022. It sets out a process of policy development for the longer term and offers guidance on this process.

4. **Primary responsibility** for sustainable development at national level rests with the Federal Chancellery, in order to highlight the significance for all policy areas and to ensure monitoring and steering across all ministries.

5. Making sustainability a reality depends to a large extent on how well **all levels interact**.

a) International level: Germany is committed to achieving progress on sustainable development within the United Nations framework – and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in particular – as well as in other formats such as the G7 and G20, and bilaterally.

b) European level:

- Germany is committed to enhanced sustainability and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at European level, specifically via a shared implementation strategy and linkages between it and national strategies.
- Germany cooperates closely with other European countries on sustainable development issues, the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) being one vehicle.

c) *Länder* (federal states) and municipalities: The German Government and the *Länder* communicate regularly in the relevant forums on the topic of sustainability with the aim of improving the coordination of activities and goals. Particular emphasis is placed on the exchange of experience between the Government and the *Länder* on sustainable development. This exchange is based on the joint declaration by the Government and the *Länder* of 6 June 2019 on sustainable development. Municipal umbrella organisations are also involved in the strategic work.

6. **Stakeholders in society – Joint Action for Sustainable Development.** The German Government regards sustainability as a joint project that should involve all stakeholders in society.

- Stakeholders from civil society (the public, trades unions, churches and civic associations) are, in many different ways, an integral part of achieving sustainability, and are involved on an ongoing basis. Among other things, consumers make their own contributions by selecting products and by using them in a way which is socially acceptable, environmentally friendly and economically meaningful.

- The private sector – businesses, chambers of commerce and associations – is called upon to play its part in supporting sustainable development. For example, businesses are responsible for their own production processes, products and services and also for ensuring that human rights are respected in their supply chains. Informing consumers about the health and environment-related properties of the products and about sustainable production methods is part of this responsibility.
- The scientific community plays an important part in the updating and implementation, on the basis of knowledge and facts, of the German Sustainable Development Strategy.
- Cultural and media professionals can, among other things, consider the development potential of a society in which we want to live in the future, and thus also develop sustainable development narratives.
- The German Government is promoting participation in the Joint Action for Sustainable Development platform (*Gemeinschaftswerk Nachhaltigkeit*), which is based on a decision by the Federation and the *Länder* of 2019 and is currently being implemented by the Council for Sustainable Development. Individual ministries are also actively involved.

II. Sustainability management concept

1. Management concept

The federal ministries use the sustainable development management concept to assess and develop measures in their particular areas of responsibility. This concept contains the following three elements:

- Principles of sustainable development (cf. [2](#) below)
- Key indicators (cf. [3](#) below)
- Monitoring (cf. [4](#) below)

2. Principles of sustainable development

The following principles set out the fundamental requirements for sustainable politics. They are intended as an aid for putting the guiding principle of sustainable development into practice and are based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and set in the context of the urgent need to transform our society and our economy.

a) Apply sustainable development as a guiding principle at all times and in all decisions

The overriding goal and benchmark of all actions is to safeguard the Earth's natural resources on a permanent basis and to enable all people to live a life in dignity now and in future.⁸

To this end, it is necessary to think about economic performance, the protection of our natural heritage, social justice and equal participation as interrelated issues, while also taking account of systemic interrelationships and technological and social innovations, so that developments for present and future generations are environmentally and socially sustainable on a global scale. Political action must be coherent.

b) Assume global responsibility

In line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, the following aspects must be interlinked at global level:

- The fight against poverty, hunger, social inequality and exclusion
- Respect, protection and guarantee of human rights
- Comprehensive participation for all in economic and social development
- Protection of the environment, especially the climate, including compliance with environmental boundaries in a regional and global context
- Responsible government action in compliance with the rule of law

Germany must consider and encourage sustainable development in other countries. Wherever possible, our actions in Germany must not have a detrimental impact on people or the environment in other countries.

c) Preserving our living environment

To safeguard the sources of life on Earth and keep within planetary boundaries, material cycles must be closed as quickly as possible and brought into alignment with ecosystem processes and functions. This means:

- Renewable natural assets (e.g. forests, water resources and fish populations) and soils may be used only within the bounds of their ability to regenerate and without impairing their other environmental functions.
- Non-renewable natural assets (e.g. mineral raw materials and fossil fuels) must be used as sparingly as possible. Renewable resources are to replace non-renewable resources, provided this reduces the environmental impact and is sustainable in every aspect.

- Substances may only be released into the environment in line with the precautionary principle and within the environmental sustainability boundaries of natural systems (environmental responsiveness).

Dangers and unjustifiable risks to human health and nature must be avoided.

d) Strengthening sustainable economic activity

The structural transformation required for global sustainable consumption and production and the technological advancements to be harnessed for this purpose should be economically successful as well as ecologically and socially sustainable, and should ensure intergenerational equity in both the German and global context.

Energy and natural resource consumption and the use of transportation must be decoupled from economic growth. At the same time, the aim must be to curb the increase in demand for energy, resources and transport, and for consumption to decline as a result of efficiency gains (absolute decoupling).

Sustainable agriculture and fishing must be productive, competitive and socially and environmentally compatible. They must protect and conserve biodiversity, soils and waters in particular, and take into account the requirements of both livestock farming that respects animal welfare, and precautionary consumer protections, especially where health is concerned.

Public budgets are obliged to take account of intergenerational equity in all of the dimensions of sustainability. The financial markets should factor in the demands of sustainable development.

e) Preserving and enhancing social cohesion in an open society

The following is required to strengthen social cohesion and leave no one behind:

- Poverty and social exclusion should be overcome, or prevented to the greatest possible extent, and inclusive prosperity promoted.
- Efforts should be made to achieve equivalent living conditions in every region.

- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to share in economic growth.
- Necessary adaptations to demographic change must be made at an early stage at political and economic level and in society.
- Everyone should be able to take part fully in social, cultural and political life without discrimination.
- Contributions should be made towards reducing poverty and inequality worldwide.

f) Using education, science and innovation as drivers of sustainable development

The necessary qualifications and capabilities must be anchored throughout the education system in line with education for sustainable development (ESD). Opportunities to participate in high-quality education and acquire skills for sustainable development action must be further enhanced, regardless of background, gender or age.

All decisions must be based on scientific findings. Science and research are called upon to align their work more intensively with the goals and challenges of global sustainable development.

Sustainability aspects must be included consistently and right from the start in innovation processes, especially in the context of the digital transformation, so that opportunities for sustainable development can be seized and risks for people and the environment can be avoided. At the same time, the willingness and scope to innovate are to be broadened.

3. Key indicators

Sustainable development is measured in **37 areas** using the following key indicators:

Table 2: Overview of the key indicators

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere			
1.1.a	Poverty Limiting poverty	Material and social deprivation	Keep the proportion of people who are materially and socially deprived below the EU average by 2030
1.1.b	Poverty Limiting poverty	Severe material and social deprivation	Keep the proportion of people suffering severe material and social deprivation below the EU average by 2030
SDG 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture			
2.1.a	Farming Environmentally sound production in our cultivated landscapes	Nitrogen surplus in agriculture	Reduction of the nitrogen surpluses of the overall balance for Germany to 70 kilograms per hectare of utilised agricultural area on an annual average between 2026 and 2030
2.1.b	Farming Environmentally sound production in our cultivated landscapes	Organic farming	Increase the proportion of organically farmed agricultural land to 30% by 2030
2.2	Food security Realising the right to food worldwide	Support for good governance in attaining appropriate nutrition worldwide	Funds disbursed for the application of the guidelines and recommendations of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to be increased appropriately as a percentage of total spending on food security by 2030
SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages			
3.1.a	Health and nutrition Living healthy for longer	Mortality avoidable through prevention and treatment (women/men)	Reduction to 200 cases per 100,000 inhabitants by 2030
3.1.c	Health and nutrition Living healthy for longer	Smoking rate among adolescents	Reduction to 7% by 2030
3.1.d	Health and nutrition Living healthy for longer	Smoking rate among adults	Reduction to 19% by 2030
3.1.e	Health and nutrition Living healthy for longer	Obesity rate among children and adolescents	Increase to be permanently halted
3.1.f	Health and nutrition Living healthy for longer	Obesity rate among adults	Increase to be permanently halted
3.2.a	Air pollution Keeping the environment healthy	Emissions of air pollutants	Reduction of emissions to 55% of 2005 level (unweighted average of the five pollutants) by 2030
3.2.b	Air pollution Keeping the environment healthy	Share of the population with excessive exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5)	Fall in the share of the population with an annual mean PM2,5 exposure of more than 10 micrograms per cubic metre (equivalent to the level of the new EU limit value for PM2,5 from 2030) to 0% by 2030

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
3.3	Global health Strengthening the global health architecture	Proportion of countries supported by Germany in pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR) that have made progress in the Global Health Security Index (GHSI), relative to the total number of countries supported by Germany in the area of PPR	By 2030, 30% of countries have achieved an improvement of at least 3 points in the Global Health Security Index (GHSI) compared to 2019

SDG 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

4.1.a	Education Continuously improving education and vocational training	Early leavers from education and training	Reduce the proportion to 9.5% by 2030
4.1.b	Education Continuously improving education and vocational training	Persons with a tertiary or post-secondary non-tertiary level of education	Increase proportion to 55% by 2030
4.1.c	Education Promoting the anchoring of education for sustainable development in the education system	Schools with an ESD label (education for sustainable development)	Steady increase
4.2.a	Prospects for families Improving the compatibility of work and family life	All-day care for children (0- to 2-year-olds)	Increase to 35% by 2030
4.2.b	Prospects for families Improving the compatibility of work and family life	All-day care for children (3- to 5-year-olds)	Increase to 70% by 2030
4.3.a	Social situation and education Promoting mobility in education biographies	Participation in education and training	Increase to 65% by 2030
4.3.b	Social situation and education Promoting mobility in educational trajectories	Proportion of 17- and 18-year-olds with (aspired) university entrance qualification	Reduce or eliminate the gap between the groups “no risk situation” and “at least one risk situation”

SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.1.a	Equality Promoting equality and a partnership-based division of responsibilities	Gender pay gap	Reduce the gap to 10% by 2030
5.1.b	Equality Promoting equality and a partnership-based division of responsibilities	Women in management positions in business	40% women on supervisory boards of listed and fully co-determined companies by 2030
5.1.c	Equality Promoting equality and a partnership-based division of responsibilities	Women in management positions in the federal civil service	Equal-opportunity participation of women and men in civil service management positions by 2025
5.1.d	Equality Promoting equality and a partnership-based division of responsibilities	Proportion of fathers receiving parental allowance	Increase to 65% by 2030
5.1.e	Equality Promoting equality and a partnership-based division of responsibilities	Average weekly working hours of all mothers and fathers	Approximation of the average weekly employment working hours of all mothers and fathers

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
5.1.f	Equality Strengthening the economic participation of women globally	Vocational qualifications for women and girls through German development cooperation	Gradual increase by one third by 2030 compared to 2015 as the base year
5.1.g	Equality Achieving equality and empower all women and girls	Proportion of project funds allocated to gender equality in German development cooperation	Increase the proportion of project funds in German development cooperation that address gender equality to at least 85% by 2030

SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

6.1.a	Water quality Reduction of substance pollution in water	Phosphorus in flowing waters	Not exceeding benchmark values for specific types of water bodies at all monitoring points by 2030
6.1.b	Water quality Reduce substance pollution in water	Nitrate in groundwater	Compliance with the nitrate threshold value of 50 mg/l at all monitoring points by 2030
6.2.a	Development cooperation for drinking water and sanitation Better access to drinking water and sanitation worldwide, higher (safer) quality	Number of people with access to new or improved drinking water supply	6 million people per year by 2030
6.2.b	Development cooperation for drinking water and sanitation Better access to drinking water and sanitation worldwide, higher (safer) quality	Number of people with access to new or improved basic sanitation or wastewater treatment	4 million people per year by 2030

SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

7.1.a	Resource conservation Using resources economically and efficiently	Final energy productivity	Significant increase
7.1.b	Resource conservation Using resources economically and efficiently	Primary energy consumption	Reduction by at least 39.3% by 2030 compared to 2008
7.2.a	Renewable energies Strengthening a sustainable energy supply	Share of renewable energies in gross final energy consumption	Increase to 41% by 2030, to 45% by 2040 and to 60% by 2050
7.2.b	Renewable energies Strengthening a sustainable energy supply	Share of electricity from renewable energy sources in gross electricity consumption	Increase to 80% by 2030

SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

8.1	Resource conservation Using resources economically and efficiently	Raw material input productivity	Trend of the years 2000 to 2010 to be maintained until 2030
8.2.a	Government debt Consolidating public finances – creating intergenerational equity	Government deficit	Annual government deficit less than 3% of GDP, to be maintained until 2030
8.2.b	Government debt Consolidating public finances – creating intergenerational equity	Structural deficit	Structurally balanced government budget, general structural deficit must not exceed 0.5% of GDP, to be maintained until 2030
8.2.c	Government debt Consolidating public finances – creating intergenerational equity	Government debt	Ratio of government debt to gross domestic product (GDP) must not exceed 60%, to be maintained until 2030

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
8.3	Provision for future economic stability Creating favourable investment conditions – securing long-term prosperity	Gross fixed capital formation in relation to GDP (investment ratio)	Appropriate development of the ratio, to be maintained until 2030
8.4	Economic performance Combining greater economic output with environmental and social responsibility	GDP per capita	Steady and appropriate economic growth by 2030
8.5.a	Employment Boosting employment levels	Employment rate, total (20- to 64-year-olds)	Increase to 83% by 2030
8.5.b	Employment Boosting employment levels	Employment rate, older people (55- to 64-year-olds)	Increase to 77% by 2030
8.5.c	Employment Increasing social justice, strengthening fair and good wages	Collective bargaining coverage	Increase the proportion of collective bargaining coverage by 2030
8.6	Sustainable and transparent corporate practices Globally responsible and transparent management	Voluntary sustainability reporting by companies according to the German Sustainability Code (DNK)	By 2030, the number of voluntary sustainability reports in accordance with the German Sustainability Code (DNK) will increase significantly

SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

9.1.a	Innovation Shaping the future sustainably with new solutions	Private and public expenditure on research and development	At least 3.5% of GDP per year by 2025
9.1.b	Innovation Shaping the future sustainably with new solutions	Rollout of broadband – share of households with access to gigabit broadband services	Universal gigabit network rollout by 2025

SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

10.1	Equal educational opportunities Improving educational success of foreigners in German schools	Foreign school graduates	Increase the proportion of foreign school leavers with at least a secondary general school certificate and bring into line with that of German school leavers by 2030
10.2	Distributive justice Prevent excessive inequality within Germany	Gini coefficient of income after social transfers	Gini coefficient of income after social transfers to be below the EU figure by 2030

SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

11.1.a	Land use Using land sustainably	Expansion of settlement and transport area	Reduction to an average of less than 30 hectares per day by 2030; 'net zero' land consumption by 2050
11.1.c	Land use Using land sustainably	Density of settlements	No reduction in density of settlements
11.2.a	Mobility Guaranteeing mobility – protecting the environment	Final energy consumption in goods transport	15 to 20% reduction by 2030 compared to 2015

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
11.2.b	Mobility Guaranteeing mobility – protecting the environment	Final energy consumption in passenger transport	Reduction by 15 to 20% by 2030 compared to 2015
11.2.c	Mobility Guaranteeing mobility – protecting the environment	Accessibility of medium-sized and large cities by public transport	Reduction of average travel time by public transport
11.3.a	Housing Affordable housing for all	Proportion of people with high housing costs	Reduce the proportion of people who are overburdened by housing costs to 13% by 2030
11.3.b	Housing Maintaining and improving quality of life, health and well-being in urban areas	Accessibility of recreational green spaces in cities	Green areas, parks etc. in cities should be within walking distance for everyone in future

SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

12.1.a	Sustainable consumption Making consumption environmentally and socially compatible	Market share of products certified by a state sustainability standard	Increase to 34% by 2030
12.1.ba	Sustainable consumption Making consumption environmentally and socially compatible	Global environmental impact by private household consumption – use of raw materials	Steady reduction
12.1.bb	Sustainable consumption Making consumption environmentally and socially compatible	Global environmental impact by private household consumption – energy consumption	Steady reduction
12.1.bc	Sustainable consumption Making consumption environmentally and socially compatible	Global environmental impact by private household consumption – CO ₂ emissions	Steady reduction
12.2a	Sustainable production Steadily increasing the proportion of sustainable production	Eco-management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)	5000 locations of organisations by 2030
12.2.b	Sustainable production Reflecting values and production patterns	Sustainability-certified cultural and media institutions	Increase the number of cultural institutions with the corresponding certifications by 2030
12.3.a	Sustainable procurement Giving shape to the public sector's exemplary role in sustainable public procurement	Share of public procurement procedures in which at least one sustainability criterion has been taken into account	Significant increase in the share of public procurement contracts in which sustainability criteria are taken into account, ensuring that this will be the norm by 2030. It should be noted that procurement to meet the needs of the Bundeswehr, the Federal Police as well as civil protection and disaster prevention does not contribute towards an increase
12.3.b	Sustainable procurement Giving shape to the public sector's exemplary role in sustainable public procurement	CO ₂ emissions of commercially available vehicles in the public sector	Significant reduction
12.3.c	Sustainable procurement Give shape to the public sector's exemplary role in sustainable public procurement	Sustainable textile procurement of the Federal Administration (excluding special textiles)	Increase to 50% by 2026
12.4	Consumer debt Consumer debt – avoid overloading consumers	Consumer debt	Reduction to below 10% by 2030

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
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SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13.1.a	Climate protection Reducing greenhouse gases	Greenhouse gas emissions	Reduction by at least 65% by 2030 and by at least 88% by 2040, in both cases compared to 1990; greenhouse gas neutrality to be achieved by 2045
13.1.b	Climate action Contribution to international climate finance	International climate finance for the reduction of greenhouse gases and adaptation to climate change	Raise international climate finance to at least 6 billion euro by 2025 at the latest

SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

14.1.a	Protecting the oceans Protecting and sustainably using oceans and marine resources	Nitrogen input in coastal and marine waters – nitrogen input via the inflows into the Baltic Sea	Adherence to good quality in accordance with the Ordinance for the Protection of Surface Waters (annual averages for total nitrogen in rivers flowing into the Baltic Sea may not exceed 2.6 mg/l)
14.1.ab	Protecting the oceans Protecting and sustainably using oceans and marine resources	Nitrogen input in coastal and marine waters – nitrogen input via the inflows into the North Sea	Adherence to good quality in accordance with the Ordinance for the Protection of Surface Waters (annual averages for total nitrogen in rivers flowing into the North Sea may not exceed 2.8 mg/l)
14.1.b	Protecting the oceans Protecting and sustainably using oceans and marine resources	Share of sustainably fished stocks of fish in the North and Baltic Seas	The share of sustainably managed fish stocks in the North and Baltic Sea in all MSY-examined stocks is to rise to 100% by 2030

SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

15.1	Biodiversity Conserving species – protecting habitats	Biodiversity and landscape quality	Reach the index value of 100 by 2030
15.2	Ecosystems Protecting ecosystems, conserving ecosystem services and preserving habitats	Eutrophication of ecosystems	Reduction by 35% by 2030 compared to 2005
15.3	Soil degradation Preserving soils and their ecosystem services	Degree of soil sealing	Declining increase in soil sealing
15.4	Sustainable land use Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of land ecosystems	Bilateral contributions from German international cooperation arrangements towards the protection, sustainable use and restoration of land (including forests), measured in hectares	Increase in sustainable land use (through protection, sustainable management, restoration) by 2030

No.	Indicator field Sustainability postulate	Indicators	Targets
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SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.2	Peace and security Taking practical measures to combat proliferation, especially of small arms	Personnel trained by the Bundeswehr to strengthen small arms control and ammunition safety	Training of at least 1,000 people by Bundeswehr experts from 2024 to 2030
16.3a	Good governance Combating corruption	Corruption Perceptions Index in Germany	Improvement by 2030, compared to 2012
16.3b	Good governance Combating corruption	Corruption Perceptions Index in partner countries for German development cooperation	Improvement by 2030, compared to 2012
16.4	Financial crime Prevent negative effects on the political order, the rule of law, the economy and society	Financial Action Task Force (FATF) rating effectiveness	Improvement to at least 8 out of 11 possible points by 2029

SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

17.1	Development cooperation Supporting sustainable development	Official development assistance as a proportion of gross national income	Increase the proportion to 0.7% of gross national income by 2030
17.2	Knowledge transfer, especially in technical areas Sharing knowledge on an international scale	Number of students and researchers from developing countries and least developed countries per year	Increase the number by 10% from 2015 to 2020, then stabilisation
17.3	Opening markets Improving trade opportunities for developing countries	Imports from least developed countries	Increase the proportion by 100% by 2030, compared to 2014

4. Monitoring

- a) The progress made in implementing the Strategy and planned further measures are reported and the Strategy further developed on a regular basis:
- Every two years, the Federal Statistical Office publishes an Indicator Report. The Office is responsible for the analysis of the indicators' development.
 - The Strategy is revised once per legislative term, as part of comprehensive reporting on the Strategy. These reports evaluate progress with Strategy implementation, contain specific measures to achieve the set targets and further develop the Strategy.
 - The reports are made available to the German Bundestag for information purposes.
- b) The public is involved on a broad basis and at an early stage in taking the Strategy further.
- c) In addition, once per legislative term the individual ministries report to the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development on how all of the component parts of their ministry policies help to further the implementation of the GSDS and the SDGs. Particular attention is paid here to conflicting objectives, and to the interrelationships with other targets. The ministry reports are published and transmitted to the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development for information purposes.

III. Institutions

1. The Federal Cabinet makes decisions concerning changes and further developments regarding the German Sustainable Development Strategy.
2. The State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development
 - a) revises the substance of the German Sustainable Development Strategy,
 - b) monitors the development of sustainability indicators on a regular basis,
 - c) is the point of contact for the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development, the German Council for Sustainable Development and the *Länder*, and
 - d) acts as an adviser on current areas of the German Government's work related to sustainability.

All ministries are represented at State Secretary level on the Committee. In line with the decision made by the Federal Cabinet on 24 August 2022, the State Secretaries' Committee is chaired by Sarah Ryglewski, Minister of State to the Federal Chancellor.

3. The meetings of the State Secretaries' Committee are prepared by a working group under the direction of the Federal Chancellery, in which all of the ministries are generally represented by the directors in charge of the matters in question.
4. The Interministerial Sustainability Indicators Working Group, which is chaired by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection and includes the Federal Statistical Office, conducts preparatory work with regard to the technical monitoring and improvement of the sustainability indicators.
5. In the German Bundestag, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development monitors and supports sustainable development policy at national, European and international level.
6. The German Council for Sustainable Development (decision of the Federal Cabinet of 26 July 2000, as amended on 4 April 2007)
 - a) advises the Federal Government on questions relating to sustainable development,

- b) contributes towards taking the Sustainable Development Strategy further,
- c) publishes statements concerning specific issues, and
- d) contributes in particular towards raising public awareness and towards the dialogue within society on sustainability.

The Council members are appointed by the Federal Chancellor.

IV. Strategy implementation procedures within the German Government

1. The ministries share responsibility for implementing the German Sustainable Development Strategy. To achieve both the Strategy's goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, they make contributions within their defined area of competence, work together at interministerial level and coordinate their projects with the *Länder* and municipalities. They ensure that private-sector and social stakeholders as well as political actors are adequately involved in policy decision processes.
2. On the basis of the Strategy, the ministries gear their activities, including their administrative practices, towards the need for sustainable development. The Ministry Coordinators for Sustainable Development work towards this. They are
 - the central points of contact for issues relating to sustainable development,
 - involved at interdepartmental level in incorporating the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda into the policy of the ministry in question, and
 - involved at interdepartmental level in ensuring that sustainability aspects are more prominently taken into account in the legislative and regulatory process, and in ministry strategies.
3. The impact of proposed legislation on sustainable development is examined and the results presented (§ 44 (1) sentence 4 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (GGO), § 62 (2) in conjunction with § 44 (1) sentence 1 GGO). In this context, the ministries outline conflicting objectives between the sustainability targets transparently and in the light of expected progress. The assessment is performed within the framework of the regulatory impact assessment by the ministry responsible

for the legislative project. The web-based electronic sustainability impact assessment tool eNAP is applied to all regulatory initiatives to improve the quality of those assessments. Derogations from this rule are possible in exceptional cases, subject to the approval of the competent Ministry Coordinator for Sustainable Development. Statements on the impact on sustainable development must also be made in the case of strategies and programmes that are particularly relevant to the goals that have been set. In line with the recommendations to strengthen the binding nature of sustainability goals in the preparation of laws, legal regulations as well as strategies and programmes (decision of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development of 14 November 2022), sustainability aspects are to be taken into account at an early stage.

4. The ministries monitor the implementation of measures under the Sustainable Development Strategy on an ongoing basis and, when required, notify the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development about any problems that arise. They regularly examine whether existing projects are aligned with the goals of the Sustainable Development Strategy, and check whether the latter could also be achieved by adjusting or terminating these projects.
5. As part of their own communications work, the ministries take care to highlight links with the Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the 2030 Agenda, including in particular links to the SDGs. The ministries support the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government with interministerial communications.
6. The ministries and their executive agencies include sustainability criteria in their governmental actions in order to implement the Programme of Sustainability Measures (decision by the Federal Cabinet of 25 August 2021), i.e. to translate sustainability into real-world administrative action. In doing so they are also helping to achieve climate neutrality by 2030.

Abbreviations and acronyms

A

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
ADT	Agora Digitale Transformation
AFBG	Aufstiegsfortbildungsförderungsgesetz (Career Development Act)
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFIR	Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulation
AG	Aktiengesellschaft (public limited company)
AGIL	“Altersgerecht, gemeinschaftlich und inklusiv leben”, pilot project for age-appropriate, communal and inclusive living
AGJ	Working group, Child and Youth Welfare Association
AHV	Außer-Haus-Verpflegung (Away-from-home catering)
AI	Artificial intelligence
AI Act	EU regulation on artificial intelligence
ALBVG	Arzneimittel-Lieferengpassbekämpfungsgesetz (Act to Improve the Supply of Medicines)
AMR	Antimicrobial resistance
ANK	Aktionsprogramm Natürlicher Klimaschutz (Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions)
AnpaSo	Climate Adaptation in Social Institutions
AOK	Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse, local health insurance provider
AUL	Bildungsvereinigung Arbeit und Leben (Education Association for Work and Life)
AVP	Abfallvermeidungsprogramm (Waste Prevention Programme)
AVV Klima	Allgemeine Verwaltungsvorschrift zur Beschaffung klimafreundlicher Leistungen (General Administrative Regulation on the Procurement of Climate-Friendly Services)
AWO	Arbeiterwohlfahrt (National Association for Workers' Welfare)

B

BAFA	Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control
BAföG	Federal Training Assistance Act
BAkÖV	Federal Academy of Public Administration
BAKS	Federal Academy for Security Policy
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BauGB	Baugesetzbuch (Federal Building Code)
BBSR	Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development
BDA	Confederation of German Employers' Associations
BDI	Federation of German Industries
BECCS	Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage
BEG	Bundesförderung für effiziente Gebäude (Federal Funding for Efficient Buildings)
BELL	Lifelong Learning and Volunteering
BFSG	Accessibility Reinforcement Act
BGZ	Bundesprogramm Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt – Vor Ort. Vernetzt. Verbunden. (Social cohesion – Local. Integrated. Interconnected.)
BHO	Bundeshaushaltsordnung (Federal Budget Code)
BIM	Building information modelling
BImA	Institute for Federal Real Estate
BKM	Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media
BLE NE	Bund-Länder-Erfahrungsaustausch zu nachhaltiger Entwicklung (exchange of experience between the Federal Government and the <i>Länder</i> on sustainable development)
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BMDV	Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport

BMEL	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
BMFSFJ	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
BMG	Federal Ministry of Health
BMWK	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
BMWSB	Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BNatSchG	Bundesnaturschutzgesetz (Federal Nature Conservation Act)
BNB	Bewertungssystem Nachhaltiges Bauen (Assessment System for Sustainable Building)
BNK	Berichtsrahmen Nachhaltige Kommune (Local Sustainability Reporting Framework)
BNW	Bildungswerk der Niedersächsischen Wirtschaft (Vocational Training School of the Lower Saxony Business Association)
BTHG	Federal Participation Act
BUND-jugend	German Federation for the Environment and Nature Conservation youth organisation
BZgA	Federal Centre for Health Education

C

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBAM	EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCS	Carbon capture and storage
CCU	Carbon capture and utilisation
CEAP	Circular Economy Action Plan
CFF	Cities Finance Facility
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CiA	Chemie im Alltag (chemistry in everyday life, smartphone application)
CIF	Climate Investment Funds
CLP	Classification, Labelling and Packaging Regulation
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
CODES	Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability
COP	Conference of the Parties (UN Climate Change Conference)
COP29	29 th UN Climate Change Conference

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CRMA	EU Critical Raw Materials Act
CSDDD	Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive
CSRD	Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
CSS	Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability

D

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DACCS	Direct air carbon capture and storage
DAN	Deutsche Aktionstage Nachhaltigkeit (German Sustainability Action Days)
DART	Deutsche Antibiotika-Resistenzstrategie (German Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy)
DATI	German Agency for Transfer and Innovation
DBJR	Deutscher Bundesjugendring (German Federal Youth Council)
DFB	German Football Association
DGB	German Trade Union Confederation
DGE	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung e.V. (German Nutrition Society)
DGNB	German Sustainable Building Council
DigiKon	Conceptualising and planning digital solutions to promote sustainable consumption for a circular economy
DIN	German Institute for Standardization
DKN	German Committee Future Earth
DOSB	German Olympic Sports Confederation
DSEE	The German Foundation for Civic Engagement and Volunteer Work

E

EAP	Environmental Action Programme
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EED	Energy Efficiency Directive
EEG	Renewable Energy Sources Act
EG	Engagement Global
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EmBaLu	Emission-Based Ventilation Control
EmpCo	Empowering Consumers

eNAP	Elektronische Nachhaltigkeitsprüfung (electronic sustainability assessment tool)
EnEfG	Energieeffizienzgesetz, The Energy Efficiency Act
EN-UAC	European funding measure ERA-NET Urban Accessibility and Connectivity
EPBD	Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ESDN	European Sustainable Development Network
ESDW	European Sustainable Development Week
ESF	European Social Fund
ESPR	Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation
ESR	Effort Sharing Regulation
EU	European Union
EUDR	Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products
EU-EHS I	EU Emissions Trading System
EURO 2024	UEFA European Football Championship
EWK-FondsG	Einwegkunststofffondsgesetz (Single-Use Plastics Fund Act)

F

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FFO	Federal Foreign Office
FiDAR	Initiative for the appointment of more women to boards of directors
FMD	Research Fab Microelectronics Germany
FONA	Research for Sustainability
FONAP	Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil
FONEI	Forum for More Sustainable Protein Feed
FüPoG	Führungspositionengesetz (Gender Equality Management Positions Act)

G

G20	Group of 20
G7	Group of Seven
GAFS	Global Alliance for Food Security
GaFöG	Ganztagsförderungsgesetz (All-Day Support for Children of Primary-School Age Act)

GAHP	Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty
GDC	Global Digital Compact
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFC	Global Framework on Chemicals
GG	Basic Law
GGO	Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien (Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries)
GHG	Gesundes-Herz-Gesetz (Healthy Heart Act)
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GHS	Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
GHSI	Global Health Security Index
GISCO	German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (limited liability company)
GMK	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Health of the <i>Länder</i>
GSDR	Global Sustainable Development Report
GSDS	German Sustainable Development Strategy
GWh	Gigawatt hour

H

H₂	Hydrogen
HBI	Holzbauinitiative (Timber Construction Initiative)
HBM	Human biomonitoring
HBM4EU	European Human Biomonitoring Initiative
HFCs	Hydrofluorocarbons
HiAP	Health in All Policies
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HOAI	Honorarordnung für Architekten und Ingenieure (German ordinance regulating the remuneration of architectural and engineering services)
HPC	High-power charging
HSC	Hamburg Sustainability Conference
Hy2Infra	European hydrogen infrastructure projects
Hy2Tech	European hydrogen technology projects
Hy2Use	European hydrogen value chain projects

I

ICI	International Climate Initiative
ICT	Information and communications technology
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IG BCE	Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMA nöB	Interministerieller Ausschuss für nachhaltige öffentliche Beschaffung (Interministerial Committee for Sustainable Public Procurement)
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
IPBES	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPCEI	Important Projects of Common European Interest
IRP	International Resource Panel
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISSB	International Sustainability Standards Board
IT	Information technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union

J

JETP	Just Energy Transition Partnership
JMD	Youth migration services

K

KAnG	Klimaanpassungsgesetz (Climate Adaptation Act)
KBK	KlimaBilanzKultur (cultural climate footprint)
KdB	Kaufhaus des Bundes (the German Government's online procurement platform)
KENFO	German Nuclear Waste Management Fund
KFN	Klimafreundlicher Neubau (Climate-Friendly New Construction)
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
KKB	Climate-Neutral Federal Administration Coordination Unit
KKG	Gesetz zur Kooperation und Information im Kinderschutz (Child Protection Cooperation and Information Act)

Klim-Pro-Industrie

Avoiding climate-damaging process emissions in industry

KMK

Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany

KNB

Kompetenzstelle für Nachhaltige Beschaffung (Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Procurement)

KNN

Klimafreundlicher Neubau im Niedrigpreissegment (Climate-Friendly New Construction in the Low-Price Segment)

KoFeMo

Combined Investigation of Particulate Matter and Mobility

KOINNO

Competence Center for Innovative Procurement

KSG

Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetz (Federal Climate Action Act)

KSP

Klimaschutzprogramm (Climate Action Programme)

L

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual

LkSG

Lieferkettensorgfaltspflichtengesetz (Supply Chain Due Diligence Act)

LULUCF

Landnutzung, Landnutzungsänderung und Forstwirtschaft (Regulation on land use, land use change and forestry)

M

MBO

Model Building Regulations

MDB

Multilateral Development Banks

mFUND

Modernity Fund

MIG

Mobilfunkinfrastrukturgesellschaft mbH

MINT

Mathematics, IT, natural sciences and technology (in English STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics)

MP NHK

Programme of Sustainability Measures

MSY

Maximum Sustainable Yield

N

N4G	Nutrition for Growth
NABU	Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union
NAP	Nationaler Aktionsplan für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung (National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation)
NBÖS	National Bioeconomy Strategy
NBS	National Biodiversity Strategy
NBSAP	National biodiversity strategies and action plans
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
NEC Directive	EU Directive on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants
NFDI	National Research Data Infrastructure
NGFS	Network for Greening the Financial System
NIB	Nachhaltig im Beruf (sustainability at work)
NKWS	National Circular Economy Strategy
NLRP	National Clean Air Programme
NPI	National Prevention Initiative
NPNK	Nationales Programm für nachhaltigen Konsum (National Programme for Sustainable Consumption)
NQZ	Nationales Qualitätszentrum für Ernährung in Kita und Schule (National Quality Centre for Nutrition in Daycare Centres and Schools)
NRI	National Reduction and Innovation Strategy for Sugar, Fats and Salt in Processed Foods

O

ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

P

PARC	Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals
PBefG	Personenbeförderungsgesetz (Passenger Transportation Act)
PDF	Portable Document Format
PFAS	Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
PIC	Prior informed consent
PM	Particulate matter

PMD	MaterialDigital platform
POP	Persistent organic pollutant
PPR	Pandemic prevention, preparedness and response
ProgRes	German Resource Efficiency Programme
PV	Photovoltaics

Q

QNG	Qualitätssiegel Nachhaltiges Gebäude (Quality Seal Sustainable Building)
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R

R&D	Research and development
RAMUS	Tyre-Abrasion Measurements and Simulation
RBC	Responsible business conduct
REACH	EU Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals
RED	EU Renewable Energy Directive
RegioStrat	Strategic regional development
RENN	Regionale Netzstellen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien (Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies)
RIBE-AHV	Richtlinie zur Förderung der Beratung von Unternehmen der Außer-Haus-Verpflegung zum vermehrten Einsatz von Produkten des ökologischen Landbaus (Guidelines on Promoting the Counselling of Away-From-Home Catering Companies on the Increased Use of Organically Farmed Products)
RKI	Robert Koch Institute
RNE	Council for Sustainable Development
RWI	Leibniz Institute for Economic Research

S

SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
SASSCAL	Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SES	System Development Strategy
SFB	Sustainable Finance Advisory Committee
SGB VIII	Book VIII of the Social Code

SKEW	Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt (Service Agency Communities in One World)
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
SPRIND	Bundesagentur für Sprunginnovationen (Federal Agency for Breakthrough Innovation)
StA NHK	Staatssekretärsausschuss für Nachhaltigkeit (State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development)
StStG	Strukturstärkungsgesetz (Act on Structural Change in Coal Mining Areas)
StVG	Straßenverkehrsgesetz (Road Traffic Act)
SUMPs	Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans

T

TEU	Treaty on European Union
TNFD	Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures
TT	Transformation Team

U

UAL-AG	Unterabteilungsleiter-Arbeitsgruppe für nachhaltige Entwicklung (Directors' working group for sustainable development)
UBA	German Environment Agency
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFSS	UN Food Systems Summit
UV	Ultraviolet radiation

V

VBL	Supplementary Pensions Agency for Federal and <i>Länder</i> Employees
VENRO	Umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian NGOs in Germany
VETSD	Vocational training for sustainable development
VGWE	Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VR	Voluntary Review
VZBV	Federation of German Consumer Organisations

W

WASCAL	West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WECF	Women Engage for a Common Future
WHO	World Health Organization
WIK	Wissenschaftliches Institut für Infrastruktur und Kommunikationsdienste (research institute for communications services)
wpn2030	Science Platform Sustainability 2030
WTO	World Trade Organization

Y

youpaN	Youth forum of the National ESD Platform
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Z

ZDHC	Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals
ZKA	Centre for Climate Adaptation
ZPAP	Zero Pollution Action Plan

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