



## Making sustainability an easy choice for EU citizens

### Inter-Institutional Group “SDGs for well-being and consumers’ protection” Launch event

DIGITAL CONFERENCE 16 February 2021, 10:00 – 12:00

Registration link: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4555956584314153744>

*#SDGsCitizenAlliance*

[www.interestgroupsdgs.eu](http://www.interestgroupsdgs.eu)

#### ***European citizen engagement and consumer policy in the service of the Sustainable Development Goals***

Welcome address by Mariano Votta

***Responsible EU Affairs at Cittadinanzattiva  
Director of Active Citizenship Network  
Secretary General at European Consumer Union***

Dear participants,

Good morning and welcome to the launch event of the informal Inter-Institutional Group “Sustainable Development Goals for well-being and consumers’ protection”. For the three promoting organizations, [Cittadinanzattiva](#) through (tru) its EU branch [Active Citizenship Network \(ACN\)](#), the [European Consumers Union \(ECU\)](#) and the [Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development \(ASviS\)](#), this day is full of messages and meanings, so thank you for joining us today.

First of all, please let me express my gratitude to the 8 Members of the EU Parliament that – to date - have decided to support our initiative: Aldo Patriciello, Sabrina Pignedoli, Giuliano Pisapia, Patrizia Toia (from Italy), Nikos Androulakis (from Greece), Tanja Fajon (from Slovenia), Jose Gusmão (from Portugal) and Marcos Ros Sempere (from Spain). A special thank to those connected with us, as we are also proud that representatives of the EU Commission, of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and of the European Economic and Social Committee are taking part to the conference, underlying their interest in the initiative.

Civil society organizations together with the EU Institutions to support the SDGs in the European framework: this is the main message of our political initiative. The Inter-Institutional Group represents the desire of the civil society to contribute to the SDGs and the Green New Deal, with the aim of discussing and raising awareness on how each one of us as EU citizen can give their contribution. Indeed, we strongly believe that citizen and consumer's empowerment should be the pillar of the transition towards a more inclusive and sustainable Europe.

While waiting for the European Institutions to propose a debate and to start a widespread involvement of civil society on the goals of the SDGs, it is the civil society across Europe that calls upon all the European institutions: **this paradigm shift represents the first characteristic** of the initiative. To underline this, there are 48 European and National Associations (coming from 24 countries) that support the Inter-Institutional Group. From our perspective, this initiative is ideally a concrete example, a translation into practice, of the thematic "citizens' agoras" encouraged by the Resolution voted last January 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Due to the profound interconnection of the SDGs between them, and between the various sectors of society, and in order to avoid any "silos approach" unfortunately still too widespread in the development of public policies both at European and Member State level, it was decided not to confine the initiative to the European Parliament only, but to extend it to the various representatives of the European institutions.

**This second characteristic** ensures that the Group is open to all members of the EU Institutions that accept to work together with the civil society to contribute that Europe will be a global leader in the development and implementation of the SDGs.

**The third characteristic of our initiative** – on which the promoting associations started working long before the European elections of May 2019 - is its aim to help bring the EU consumer policy - and with it the diverse consumer movement - closer to the objectives set by the 2030 Agenda: the SDGs provide guidelines for the sustainable transformation of all policy areas and thus also of consumer policy. Consequently, no actor - whether public or private - engaged in the implementation of consumer policies can be considered exempt from providing its own contribution towards achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

In this sense, the Inter-institutional Group intends to provide its contribution, aiming to be:

- a. An **awareness rising catalyst** across Europe for civil society, business, research, media, etc. at national and European level.
- b. A **dialogue facilitator** between the European institutions and stakeholders active in specific fields.
- c. An **incubator of good practices** in order to facilitate the process of exchange, contamination and dissemination of best experiences to enable EU citizens to make sustainable choices.

A majority of EU citizens are now conscious of environmental issues and they are willing to make correct choices in their consumption. However, the gap between intentions and actions remains high. Just before the pandemic, young people in several EU countries have been asking for a more ambitious political leadership on climate action and green lifestyles. For its part, the New Consumer Agenda, adopted on 13 November 2020 by the European Commission, gives back momentum to the EU consumer policy, aiming to better equip the EU to tackle the new challenges to consumer rights and opportunities for consumer empowerment brought about by the green and digital transitions, the COVID pandemic and the plans for post-COVID recovery. There is therefore a momentum for a public action to accelerate the transition to the green economy: citizens at global level are united by a common language, the one of the SDGs, which should shift from being a “good intention” to being a shared “culture of doing”. What responses could EU consumer policy provide? What is European citizens’ role in reaching the ambitions of the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals? What is the connection with European consumers' rights? It will be interesting to know the opinions of the panellists on this, that of course I thank in advance for having accepted the invitation.

In this regard, let me congratulate Prof. Giovannini, spokesman at ASviS, that Saturday has been appointed the new Italian Minister of Infrastructure and Transport, and today is replaced by a colleague from the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS).

The transition to a sustainable and efficient economy requires radical changes in the consumption habits of our society and in the production models of our economy. We are all aware that “leaving no one behind” means that all members of society, including the most vulnerable classes, are enabled to take advantage of this opportunity, while being more protected from the risks. “Leaving no one behind” also means empowering as many people as possible to play a positive and active role so that they can fully participate in the transition.

For these reasons, the active participation of European citizens should be at the base of this transition, and with this aim the promoting associations of the Inter-Institutional Group want to strengthen the dialogue with the European institutions, convinced that - now more than ever - there is the need of a European Union closer to its citizens. This need is made even more urgent by the rising of new challenges that are creating first-class and second-class citizens in the accessibility to primary goods and public services, starting from healthcare services but not only. We are convinced that these issues should be at the centre of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Well, my turn is over. Please let me thank in advance Brian Maguire for having agreed to chair the conference. As a journalist, producer and broadcaster, with great experiences on European politics and business, Brian is the right person to be the moderator of this event.

Thanks again for the attention. I wish you a fruitful webinar.

Mariano Votta