



Norway and the United Nations in Brussels joined forces to address the question of how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be translated into reality at a seminar in Brussels 12 June on the occasion of Norway Day.

The question raised in the seminar was : “How can Norway and Europe contribute to a sustainable future through high quality education, research and innovation?”

Norway is not a member of the European Union, but has close ties to it, notably as an associate country to the Horizon Europe the seven-year (2021-2027) €100 billion EU research and innovation programme, which has a strong emphasis on sustainability.

“It is a close member of the family, although it doesn’t live in the same house,” as Pierre Schellekens, Deputy Head of the Cabinet of the European Commissioner on Climate Action Energy put it in his closing remarks.

Iselin Nybø, the Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education said in her opening remarks that she was very happy that the Commission has proposed the largest ever research and innovation funding programme, which she says is in line with Norwegian priorities.

“We are especially happy to see the emphasis that the UN places on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. “I am convinced of one thing: few tools will be as powerful as higher education and research. If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals we need knowledge, new ideas and new technology.”

The Minister pointed out that according to an opinion poll only 6% of Norwegians believed that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals could be achieved before 2030.

Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, Director of the UN/UNDP office in Brussels said it was imperative to engage the public. “If we don’t make it relevant for people it is not going to happen,” Pesce-Monteiro said. She pointed to the recent success of the #MeToo movements and coastal cleaning campaigns, including the efforts of UN Environment, as reasons for optimism. “It is amazing to see how the issue of plastic in the seas has within a year, year and a half.. generated a whole movement were people all over the world are looking at how they can reduce their use of plastic.”

Business philosopher Anders Inset approached the subject from a different angle. He said that young people had to rise up against their bosses. “The long meetings, kill them off. Get into action, that’s how it is going to be.” The way forward was to follow the path of Amazon and use short presentations, no hierarchies. “Everyone is creating stuff. The project is the boss in any organisation and we need a story.”

Three examples of Norwegian sustainable solutions were presented. Co-founder Christine Spiten presented Blueye Robotics, the world’s finest underwater drone for ocean exploration. “We want to make the ocean available to everyone. We want to connect people to the ocean, so they can feel compassion and care for it and take better care of this part of the world which covers two-thirds of the planet that we live on,” Spiten said.

Alf Inge Wang from the Institute for Data Technology and Informatics, NTNU presented Kahoot, a game-based learning and trivia platform which is used in classrooms, offices and social

settings. He used the Kahoot app to engage the audience, who were asked to do a multiple choice quiz on the Company. One question that many failed to answer correctly was, how many annual users Kahoot has: many underestimated the number which is an impressive 70 million.

SDG 17 on sustainable cities and communities was addressed by Morten Wolden, the chief executive of the City of Trondheim who gave a presentation about carbon neutral cities – and smarter and more sustainable regions, and insisted on international cooperation.

“In order to realize the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and create a society that is characterized by thriving and resilience Trondheim needs to open up, connect, share and engage in mutual learning, both locally and globally.”

NorCore, the Norwegian Contact Office for Research/Innovation/Education, Norway’s Mission to the EU and the UN in Brussels co-organized the event.

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