

Summary of a DevCom Discovery Lab *Connecting Citizens with Sustainable Development*

OECD Forum, Paris, 6 June 2017

On 6 June, as part of the [2017 OECD Forum](#), the OECD Development Communication Network (DevCom) organised a [Discovery Lab](#) on *Connecting Citizens with Sustainable Development*. In line with the overall theme of the Forum (*Bridging Divides*) this event focused on two questions:

- How can we ensure that *all* citizens play their part in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals?
- How can we restore trust in public institutions and international development cooperation?

Bathylle Missika, Head of the Partnerships & Networks Unit of the OECD Development Centre, moderated a conversation with three panellists:

- **Tatiana Landysheva**, Vice President of AIESEC International and Global Manager of the Youth 4 Global Goals campaign
- **Ramiro Fernandez**, Director of Climate Change at Fundación Avina
- **Rasmus Kristensen**, Head of Department of Public Diplomacy, Communication and Press of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Here are three messages that stood out from the discussion.

1. People *do* care: there is great potential to engage citizens for sustainable development!

Some people feel gloomy about the prospects for the SDGs and international development cooperation, but there are powerful reasons for hope. Ms. Landysheva cited [research by YouthSpeak](#) showing that young people care a lot about their purpose in life, contrary to the belief that millennials are a disengaged “lost generation”. Citing a recent national survey, Mr. Kristensen said that that 80% of Danes are interested in learning more about sustainable development. Mr. Fernandez provided examples to show how, around the world, community-based organisations, cities and businesses are joining forces to fill gaps in climate action left by national governments.

2. We *can* break out of our “bubble” and reach new constituencies

Despite strong public support for development cooperation in Denmark, there are trust and knowledge gaps. Fuelled by media that prefer to focus on the bad news, many people falsely believe that global poverty is on the rise, and that development cooperation doesn’t work. Initiatives like the [World’s Best News](#) aim to bust these myths, convincing the media and sceptical audiences that progress is possible.

Engaging with youth is central to achieving sustainable development, but many young women and men feel left out of political decision-making processes. The [Youth 4 Global Goals](#) promotes youth as a central partner for sustainable development and, in 2017 alone, aims to mobilise 50,000 young people into action through volunteering opportunities. Meanwhile, governments and businesses need to work together to create jobs that can both run a profit and align with the ideals of young job seekers.

3. The SDGs: an opportunity to put people at the centre, both North and South

The SDGs are a universal set of goals for all countries. No matter where they live, citizens have tangible roles to play. Development actors have begun seizing this opportunity. AIESEC is developing a *Young Person’s Guide to Saving the World*, spelling out concrete, everyday actions that citizens can take to contribute to every one of the 169 SDG targets. In Denmark, campaigns around the reduction of food waste have shown citizens how their personal actions can make a global difference. Across Latin America, the [Fundación Avina](#) promotes the use of civic technologies, helping citizens engage in social change and make their own commitments to sustainable development.

Global frameworks and international agreements often seem abstract and impersonal. Development actors need to make them tangible and relatable to all people. That is how we will achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.