1. The EU and Agenda 2030

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We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 as the Organization celebrates its seventieth anniversary, have decided today on new global Sustainable Development Goals. On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets. We commit ourselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030.

(United Nations, 2015: 4)

About 70 years ago, state leaders around the globe decided to create the United Nations (UN) to emphasize the importance of global solidarity and collaboration to provide for peace and prosperity. Today, a new generation of state leaders have decided to work towards sustainable peace and prosperity to safeguard our planet and human dignity. On 25–27 September 2015, the heads of states, at a special UN Summit, which included 193 member states, debated and adopted *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (see Chapter 2). The Agenda became operational in 2016, with a lifespan of 15 years, in the context of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (European Commission, 2016: 1; European Commission, 2019: 6). The 2030 Agenda consists of four sections: (i) a political declaration, (ii) 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, (iii) means of implementation and (iv) a framework for follow up and review of the Agenda. Into the Agenda are embedded different dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, cultural, political and environmental – and it stresses how all of these dimensions and goals are interlinked and must be approached together to promote global sustainability. The Agenda explicitly stresses a shared global responsibility and the necessity of a global partnership to promote a better world (United Nations, 2015).

Agenda 2030 is the result of a long political process, which started in June 2012 with the Rio-20 Conference on Sustainable Development, where participating states agreed to develop global SDGs based on the previous Millennium Development Goals and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The Agenda 2030 is, however, also guided in its foundation by the UN Charter and the Universal

Table 1.1 *Summary of Agenda 2030*

Goals	Content
1. End Poverty	Reduction and, in the long term, eradication of poverty
2. Food Security	End hunger and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Health and Well-Being	Health systems, health coverage and countermeasures for diseases
4. Quality Education	Inclusive and equitable education, as well as life-long learning opportunities
5. Gender Equality	Girls' and women's empowerment, plus social and economic participation
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	Sustainable management of water to provide safe water and sanitation
7. Sustainable Energy	Sustainable energy services, and sure access to affordable, reliable and modern energy
8. Works and Growth	Promote decent work and full employment through inclusive and sustainable economic growth
9. Industries and Innovation	Sustainable industrialization and fostered innovation
10. Reduced Inequalities	Structural transformation to address income inequalities
11. Sustainable Community	Sustainable urbanization to enhance effective local development
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	Responsible supply chains and business practices, as well as promotion of green economy
13. Climate Action	Combat climate change and its impacts
14. Life below Water	Conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources
15. Life on Land	Protect and promote sustainable terrestrial ecosystems on land, and combat unsustainable management of forests, desertification and land degradation
16. Peaceful Societies and Strong Institutions	Promote inclusive societies based on strong institutions and the rule of law
17. Global Partnerships and Implementation	Strengthen and monitor means of implementation of development goals based on global partnerships

Declaration of Human Rights and is influenced by various historical decisions and instruments.¹ The established 17 SDGs (see Table 1.1) and the 169 targets of the Agenda are to be applied globally and highlight the four Ps – people, planet, prosperity and peace:

1. People – actions aimed at ending poverty and hunger by promoting a healthy environment.
2. Planet – actions aimed at protecting the world from degradation by fostering sustainable consumption and production, as well as the sustainable

management of natural resources with a focus on combating climate change.

3. Prosperity – actions aimed at ensuring sustainable economic, social and technological progress.
4. Peace – actions aimed at fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies, free from fear and violence, and based on enduring institutions and the rule of law (United Nations, 2015: preamble).

The UN has stated that billions of citizens continue to face global challenges. Although progress has been made on many goals, the Agenda calls for enforcement of crucial new global reforms to fight the numerous and complex challenges. The focus must be on countries steeped in poverty and despair, as well as on conflict or post-conflict status, people with special vulnerability, such as children, youth, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and diseases, refugees and indigenous groups. Some alarming and global challenges are poverty and unsafe drinking water, hunger and diseases, social and economic inequalities within and among countries, gender inequality, unemployment, social marginalization and discrimination, illiteracy and poor education, conflicts and wars, human rights abuses and humanitarian crises, and unjust societies. In addition, global challenges present in natural disasters and climate change in desertification, drought, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, sea level rise and ocean acidification and unsustainable energy. In sum, the Agenda 2030 is a far-reaching agenda that addresses SDGs in the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental spheres, including all geographical areas and intended for every global citizen.

The UN urges a global commitment to address challenges and reach the development goals by 2030 (see Goal 17). It does not only address the crucial importance of state engagement in the developed and developing world, but also of local, sub-regional, regional and global engagement, in addition to private-sector actorness and civil society. The Preamble of Agenda 2030 clearly argues that only through partnerships can necessary means be mobilized to address the many and highly interrelated SDGs. As stated in the Preamble of Agenda 2030:

All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. (United Nations, 2015: preamble)

EU GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON AGENDA 2030

The Agenda identifies state governments as primary actors to promote the 17 goals, and to monitor the implementation of measures taken on all levels of governance. The Agenda also calls upon individual states to develop national responses implementing measures intended to obtain the development goals, and to set up tools to conduct reviews of past progress and future challenges on each goal. The states are addressed as the engines driving the reforms, but, as stated, their efforts must be complemented by work at the regional/international level as a potential opportunity for increased capacity.

Today, the UN Agenda 2030 is the blueprint for Europe's push for sustainable development and the European Union (EU) has stressed its position as a frontrunner to implement sustainable development throughout Europe (European Commission, 2016: 3), but also through its external actions. Based on the identified SDGs, the European Commission has set out priorities to work on, as key challenges for Europe (see also Chapter 3). As stated by the Commission,

The SDGs, together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, are the roadmap to a better world and the global framework for international cooperation on sustainable development and its economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions. The EU was one of the leading forces behind the United Nations 2030 Agenda and has fully committed itself to its implementation. (European Commission, 2019: 6)

In 2016, the European Commission published the Communication *Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future – European Action for Sustainability*. The Commission stressed that 'a life of dignity for all within the planet's limits that reconciles economic prosperity and efficiency, peaceful societies, social inclusion and environmental responsibility is at the essence of sustainable development' (European Commission, 2016: 2). The Communication confirmed that Europe, compared to many places in the world, is in a beneficial starting position to implement sustainable reforms based on a historically good track record within the EU institutions and Treaties of committing to sustainable development (European Commission, 2016: 2). Despite the favourable position in a global context, the Communication also addressed challenges that exist in Europe. It highlighted the extent to which European societies face many sustainability challenges, in unemployment, aging populations, climate change, pollution, unsustainable energy, migration, inequalities, healthcare shortages, resource inefficiency, the demand for research and innovation and an old-fashioned economy in need of becoming greener (European Commission,

2016: 2). It further highlighted that existing challenges needed to be solved to protect and develop the European social economic model that had been developed successfully since the 1950s (Silander, 2019: 36–53). Hard work on sustainable development would occur in cross-cutting projects, sectoral policies and initiatives, based on the previous records in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy of 2001, revised in 2006 and reviewed in 2009.

In Europe, the UN Agenda 2030 was preceded by the European Agenda 2020, which was already initiated in 2010 by the Commission (see Chapter 3). The Agenda 2020 was an official communication by the European Commission titled *Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* and represented a direct response to the global recession of 2008–2009. The Commission called for a European partnership similar to the commitments cited by the UN in Agenda 2030; this partnership was conceived in a European context, however, to coordinate all EU institutions, member states, regional and local authorities and the private sector to address the economic crisis (Wandel, 2016: 10; Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2014: 8–9). Together, the European partnership would promote and implement measures aimed at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: smart growth, in terms of promoting an economy based on knowledge and innovation; sustainable growth, in terms of economic growth based on resource efficiency and a greener economy; and inclusive growth, in terms of growth that provides for social integration.

It then argued that the ongoing recession, which had severe political (rising nationalism and populism), economic (unemployment and declining growth) and social (marginalization, exclusion and poverty) consequences, and which jeopardized European integration and collaboration, had to be solved through sustainable development. Based on the strategy of Agenda 2020 and a political system of European governance, the Commission described how the European Council had to play the role of guiding the EU member states towards the objectives set out in the agenda. The European Council was expected to steer the work on Agenda 2020, as the political body capable of promoting integration and collaboration and ensuring member state interdependence and collaboration between the EU and member states. On the other hand, the Council of Ministers would be responsible for the implementation of Agenda 2020, making sure that all objectives were met. The progress made by member states with regional and local authorities would be monitored and assessed annually by the European Commission to ensure implementation. It was also the role of the Commission to set out policy recommendations, warnings and proposals based on these assessments of individual member states. The European Parliament would be co-legislator with the Council of Ministers, as well as integrator of European citizens into the agenda; it would compel national parliaments to engage in debate concerning the best possible ways to implement Agenda 2020 on a national level, as well as on regional and local

levels, including domestic authorities in relation to private actors and civil society (Silander, 2018).

In 2010, the fulfilment of Agenda 2020 in Europe not only required coordinated actions throughout the system of European governance, but arguably, it also demanded the pursuit of European political entrepreneurship, leadership, innovative ideas and bold measures. The previous economic crisis was a wake-up call for the EU and an alarming signal that European politics as usual would lead the EU, along with member states, into further recession and the second rank in the new global economic order. However, a European crisis could also serve as a window of opportunity for European integration, as had been the case throughout the many decades of European politics (see Cross, 2017). The EU had to engage new, innovative politics and be bold and ambitious, by showing leadership and entrepreneurship, to determine Europe's socioeconomic future. In 2010, the former chair of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, called for new innovative measures taken by politicians, bureaucrats, officers and institutions within the publicly funded sector (this study refers to such behaviour as European political entrepreneurship). With innovative approaches, political entrepreneurship encourages entrepreneurship towards a goal of growth and employment for the common good (see Karlsson et al., 2016, 2018; Silander & Silander, 2015). As stated by the former chair of the Commission,

The condition for success is a real ownership by European leaders and institutions... European leaders have a common analysis of the lessons to be drawn from the crisis. We also share a common sense of urgency on the challenges ahead. Now we jointly need to make it happen... We must have confidence in our ability to set an ambitious agenda for ourselves and then gear our efforts to delivering it. (Barroso, 2010: preface)

In a similar fashion, the next chair of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated, in reference to the complexity of global sustainable development challenges as set out in Agenda 2030, that Europe had to tackle such challenges through new, bold and innovative political measures to provide for sustainable development in Europe and globally. Based on the successful work to tackle the economic crisis of 2008, and on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and forward movement, Juncker stressed that the wind was back in Europe's sails and that this was the moment for bold leadership, changes and reforms, and to stand strong for present and future challenges. As he argued,

Europe was not made to stand still. It must never do so. Helmut Kohl and Jacques Delors, whom I had the honour to know, taught me that Europe only moves forward when it is bold. The single market, Schengen and the single currency: these were all ideas that were written off as pipe dreams before they happened. And yet these

three ambitious projects are now a part of our daily reality. Now that Europe is doing better, people tell me I should not rock the boat. But now is not the time to err on the side of caution. We started to fix the European roof. But today and tomorrow we must patiently, floor by floor, moment by moment, inspiration by inspiration, continue to add new floors to the European House. We must complete the European House now that the sun is shining and whilst it still is. Because when the next clouds appear on the horizon – and they will appear one day – it will be too late. So let's throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the harbour. And catch the trade winds in our sails. (Juncker, 2017)

POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Juncker Commission statements on UN 2030 reflected on the need for European political entrepreneurship to build a better Europe. The bulk of the studies in economics have, for more than half a century, stressed the extent to which entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs are vital aspects of growing and dynamic societies (see Schumpeter, 1934; Carroll, 2017). In the academic literature, the focus is on the crucial role that entrepreneurship plays in development, identifying entrepreneurs as the important risk takers, innovators and responders to socioeconomic challenges. Although research on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship has taken place mostly within economics, there has been a growing pool of studies on entrepreneurial activity in the public sector. This growing body of literature has been inspired by core elements of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship from the business sector, such as the importance of knowledge, innovation, opportunity, implementation and risk taking (Carroll, 2017: 115–19).

Although the concept of a public entrepreneur had already been identified in 1965 (see Ostrom, 1965), it took about three more decades for the concept of entrepreneurship in the public sector to be developed further in academia (Baumol, 1990). Studies have identified public entrepreneurs as innovative and creative actors within municipalities and public corporations, who seek implementation of innovations in public-sector practice (Ostrom, 1965; Roberts & King, 1991). Studies have also identified social entrepreneurs as innovative and goal-oriented citizens who have an objective of promoting a normative good that may not be economically oriented; rather, they may have social goals in cooperative associations, interest organizations and movements and so on (Gawell et al., 2009; Borzaga et al., 2008). In addition, policy entrepreneurs have often been used to exemplify actors beyond the formal positions of government, who seek to introduce and implement new ideas in the public sector (Roberts & King, 1991) or for politicians and/or government employees who act upon what they see as a window of opportunity to improve government policies. Policy entrepreneurs may or may not be formally or directly engaged in legislative policymaking, but their know-how, reputation,

Table 1.2 *Types of entrepreneurs – European political entrepreneurs*

Types of entrepreneurs	Common definitions
Economic/business entrepreneurs	Actors within the business sector acting as risk takers, innovators and responders to market disequilibria to seek economic gains for their companies/organizations
Social entrepreneurs	Actors within civil society who seek societal changes within cooperative associations, interest organizations, aid branches and rights and liberties movements
Policy entrepreneurs	Actors inside or outside the formal positions of government/politics who seek to introduce and implement new ideas in the public sector for development of the public good rather than for individual profit
Public entrepreneurs	Actors within public corporations from the public sector who seek implementation through innovations in public-sector practice
Bureaucratic entrepreneurs	Actors who gain power from policymakers to influence the policy process and/or the public sector by initiating a political process, setting priorities or interpreting the implementation phase
Political entrepreneurs (traditionally applied)	Actors (politicians) within the political arena, driven by the common good or individual profit from the political system, acting to receive political support, votes, campaign contributions or improved political status
<i>Political entrepreneurs – theoretically defined in this study</i>	Actors and institutions (politicians, bureaucrats, officers and institutions) within the publicly funded sector that act with innovative approaches to encourage entrepreneurship/business and for which the goal is growth and employment for the common good
<i>European political entrepreneurs – empirically applied in this study</i>	European actors and institutions (European and EU politicians, bureaucrats, officers and institutions) within the publicly funded sector that act with innovative approaches to encourage entrepreneurship/business and for which the goal is growth and employment for the common good; i.e. Agenda 2030 Goals

money and time puts them in a position to develop and present alternative policy solutions to existing problems that face policymakers (Kingdon, 1995). Finally, bureaucratic entrepreneurs have been referred to as acting as public servants or similar who gain power from policymakers to influence the policy

process by initiating a political process, setting priorities and interpreting the implementation phase and so on (Silander, 2016: 11–12; Carroll, 2017; Roberts & King, 1991).

There is a growing body of studies on different types of entrepreneurs. Some of the most commonly used are summarized in Table 1.2.²

More recent studies embody the developing multidisciplinary approach to entrepreneurship, which has focused on political entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurship (Silander, 2016, 2018; Silander & Silander, 2015; Scheingate, 2003).³ Recent research on political entrepreneurship has been based on a few core aspects. First, studies on political entrepreneurship have focused on political entrepreneurs from an actor-oriented perspective by analysing individual motives and perceptions, using institutions as a forgotten dimension. Second, such studies have often started from the assumption that political entrepreneurship is aimed at individual profit-seeking activities within the political/public system, rather than at the common good. Third, it has also been argued that fuzzy distinctions have been made between what actually defines political entrepreneurship; that is to say there is still some ambiguity surrounding the nature of political entrepreneurship, compared to regular, day-to-day political/public activities in the public sector. From a political entrepreneurship perspective, studies have focused on the ways that politicians and bureaucrats may change tax distribution, regulations and implementation procedures, but have forgotten to make compelling arguments about whether regular activities in politics can be defined as political entrepreneurship (Scheingate, 2003; Holcombe, 2002; Schneider & Teske, 1992). Fourth and last, political entrepreneurship has also been studied in a domestic setting of societal actors, a perspective that fails to account for the potential importance of these actors on the international scene, such as within international organizations like the EU.

Following recent studies on political entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurship (see Karlsson et al., 2016, 2018; Silander & Silander, 2015), *our perspective focuses on politicians, public servants, bureaucrats and institutions that seek to create new, innovative and favourable formal and informal institutional conditions* (see North, 1990; Kingdon, 1995). Political entrepreneurship is about approaching and challenging traditional formal institutions in political steering, leadership, strategies, policies, rules, regulations, laws and budgets for entrepreneurial activities and/or in the ideas, attitudes, values, perceptions, images and symbols of traditional informal institutions in ways that structure day-to-day public activities and culture around entrepreneurship (North, 1990; Morgan, 1986; Putnam, 1993). Political entrepreneurship in this book occurs when traditional EU/European institutions, formal and/or informal, are challenged and changed by new institutions, formal and/or informal, better suited to promote entrepreneurial activity on the SDGs of the Agenda 2030. As

argued in a previous study, ‘The political entrepreneur operates beyond traditional and routinized procedures and is innovative and creative in using formal and informal institutions and networks to improve the public sector’s activities towards entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship by developing and promoting new norms that have not been embedded in traditional day-to-day public activities’ (Silander, 2016: 10).

The implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs began in 2016 and governments, institutions, organizations, businesses, universities and individuals started to work on the realization of the goals. At the global level, the sustainable goals are meant to be transformed into national, regional and local ones, and they are therefore translated into national legislation. This allows for a broad range of cooperation and coordination among the various countries and regions. The entire world seems to work towards the realization of the SDGs, thereby involving many actors at all levels of governance, who shape the goals and influence the implementation and achievement of Agenda 2030. This offers a wide area and a huge platform for political entrepreneurs to shape the policy process and the outcomes.

AIM AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on European political entrepreneurship in the EU’s approach towards the Agenda 2030 strategy, adding an international perspective on entrepreneurship to a discussion of the European context. The aim of the study is to analyse the 2030 Agenda, its SDGs and the role of European political entrepreneurs in shaping, influencing and realizing these goals at all levels of European governance. Based on studies of political entrepreneurship in a European context, the book adds to our conceptual insights regarding the role of political entrepreneurship and its potential to shape policies. In contrast to other studies, this study broadens the area of political entrepreneurship at an international level and explains how European political entrepreneurs, at various governance levels, act and interact to push their policies through. The aim of the study is therefore twofold: first, to analyse the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, as well as the role of EU political entrepreneurship in debating, shaping and implementing the agenda at all levels of governance; and second, to provide conceptual insights regarding the role of political entrepreneurship and the political entrepreneur at an international level.

CONCLUSION

This book on EU governance and political entrepreneurship in Agenda 2030 explores the role of EU actors in debating, shaping and implementing Agenda 2030 in Europe. It explores several EU actors in the context of numerous

development goals to see how the EU overall has downloaded the UN SDGs in a European context. This chapter has asserted that the EU constitutes a system of governance, and that the European Commission has a prior record of accomplishment as an engine driving the promotion of sustainable development in Europe. The initiation of Agenda 2020 for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was a major reform within Europe between 2010 and 2020 and yielded great results within most EU member states (see Silander, 2019). Such efforts within Europe have influenced the debate and decisions leading up to the UN Agenda 2030. The UN Agenda represents a complex set of goals that includes most areas of society: social, economic, environmental, cultural and political. The development goals are devised to protect and promote the people, planet, prosperity and peace through a global partnership. This book explores the content of Agenda 2030, the many actors involved in European governance to promote such goals and the ways that these UN goals are embedded in a European context through European political entrepreneurship.

NOTES

1. These include the following: the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the Second UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the Third UN World Conference on Disaster.
2. Many different types of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are described in the literature, and the definitions of these types have differed from one study to another. This has led scholars to argue that 'perhaps the largest obstacle in creating a conceptual framework for the entrepreneurship field has been its definition. What the many different studies on types of entrepreneurship have in common is the main focus on how entrepreneurship includes knowledge, innovation, opportunity, implementation and risk taking as core elements' (see Carroll, 2017: 115). However, the primary distinction between private/business and public-sector entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship has been the lack of entrepreneurial profit (see Boyett, 1996: 49) in public-sector entrepreneurship.
3. Such conceptualization was introduced by Robert Dahl, who focused on resourceful and masterful political leaders and argued that the political entrepreneur was 'the epitome of the self-made man' (1974: 25, 223–7, 282). According to Dahl, *Homo politicus* are people formally engaged in politics. Political entrepreneurs may be driven by the common good and the provision of collective benefits to the many, but they may also be oriented towards individual profit seeking from the political system through, for instance, receiving political support and votes, campaign contributions or improved political status (see Dahl, 1974). In Dahl's discussions, individual leaders are often referred to as entrepreneurial politicians (Scheingate, 2003), but others have used political entrepreneurship to refer to

individuals trying to profit individually from the political system (see McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011).

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