

THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE AS “EXPERT ON THE EXPERT”

INTRODUCTION

The European Institute (EI) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is the world’s largest centre for the study of Europe in the world. Founded in 1991, the EI has become the “*expert on the expert*” - coinciding with the European Union’s (EU) growing global leadership in environmental and climate policy. LSE is strongly committed to promoting sustainable development globally through research and education. The EI is best placed to represent the university at the upcoming High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the conference, researchers and policymakers will take stock of the progress towards achieving the SDGs, which were agreed in 2015, ahead of the 2030 deadline. In recent years, the Institute has made significant contributions to the fields related to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) through its research on the governance of labour markets, human rights, institutional capacity, and global justice. The European Institute's research strengths, research volume, and international pedigree make it the best candidate to represent LSE at the HLPF.

1. SDGs

1.1 SDG 8

Promoting “*sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*” is the goal of SDG 8. Overall, it addresses the challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty while boosting innovation, entrepreneurship, and social and economic inclusion.

We have selected to prioritise SDG 8 for two primary reasons: its relevance and our proficiency in this domain. Firstly, it focuses on inequality and economic growth, which are key obstacles to a sustainable future. Secondly, SDG 8 is particularly aligned with two of our departmental programs, namely the MSc European and International Public Policy and the MSc Political Economy of Europe programs. These programs and related departmental research themes focus on policy development grounded in the fields of economics, social sciences and public policy.

Therefore, we identify two primary targets from SDG 8 that we believe require specific attention and to which the EI can effectively contribute with its research and fieldwork. These targets are as follows:

- **Target 8.1:** “*Achieving sustained economic growth in the least developed countries, with a target of at least 7% annual GDP growth*”;

- **Target 8.5:** “Promoting decent work for all individuals, focusing on achieving full and productive employment, particularly for marginalised groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities.”

Focusing on these targets with research and effective impact on policymaking can help to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 8. Section 3 will show how by focusing on SDG 8, we can leverage our department's expertise to make meaningful contributions towards achieving the targets of this goal.

1.2 SDG 16

The second SDG that we have chosen is SDG 16: “*peace, justice and strong institutions*”. Specifically, it aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. It was adopted by the UN in September 2015 as one of the 17 SDGs, which collectively aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. SDG 16 has ten specific targets. The two most targets relevant to the European Institute are:

- **Target 16.6:** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels;
- **Target 16.8:** Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance.

The quality and volume of the European Institute’s related research in European governance and politics make SDG 16 highly relevant. The EI has a strong track record of research on the EU's institutional design, including topics such as democratic accountability, transparency, and legitimacy. In line with its research themes, the EI features the MSc International Migration and Public Policy and the MSc Culture and Conflict in a Global Europe. These research strengths, coupled with specific academic programs, are directly relevant to the targets set out in SDG 16, such as reducing corruption, ensuring access to justice, and strengthening institutional capacity.

2. WHY IS THE EI BEST PLACED

The European Institute is best placed to represent LSE at the HLPF because of its research strengths in the relevant SDGs 8 and 16. In this section, we situate the EI’s leadership within LSE and the global context and explain the key research strengths and findings for SDGs 8 and 16.

First, “*The European Institute is the largest centre for the study of Europe anywhere in the world*” (<https://www.lse.ac.uk/european-institute/about-us>). It employs, teaches, and trains experts on the European Union, arguably the world’s most advanced supranational political and economic organisation and the global climate and environmental policy leader. Essentially, this makes the European Institute “*the*

expert on the expert” by researching and influencing EU policies. This fact alone makes a strong case for the LSE European Institute to have the honour of representing the LSE at the HLPF to provide expertise and advice to influence policies for implementing the SDGs.

2.1 Selected pieces of research concerning SDG 8

The EI is well advanced in research concerning SDG 8 targets identified in Section 1. Here are two examples of EI streams of research:

- **“The Transition to the Knowledge Economy, Labor Market Institutions, and Income Inequality in Advanced Democracies”** (Martelli, 2019): in practice, this study establishes the link between the targets 8.1 and 8.5 by concluding that strong labour institutions can mitigate the high-income inequality caused by the knowledge economy and lack of skills and training in the labour markets.
- **“International Trade and Good Regulatory Practices: Assessing The Trade Impacts of Regulation”** (Basedow, 2016): Robert Basedow focuses on the role of trade and investment concerning regulation and cooperation in those fields to spur sustainable economic growth. The paper belongs to the OECD Regulatory Policy Working papers exemplifying the impact that research at EI can have on policy-making. In brief, it gives recommendations on how decision-makers may enhance the use of Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIA), which is a tool to ensure high-quality regulation that serves the public interest.

This is a small snapshot to show the potential of our departmental research and its policy relevance.

Selected pieces of research concerning SDG 16

Regarding SDG 16, the European Institute serves also as a fertile ground for generating ideas and proposals. In 2016, Professor Eiko Thielemann testified before the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, presenting three proposals for distributing asylum seekers. Thielemann's article **“Escaping Populism - Safeguarding Minority Rights: Non-majoritarian Dynamics in European Policy-making”** (2018) illustrated that the communitarization of asylum policies in the EU has not resulted in a weakening of refugee rights. Instead, increased harmonization across the EU has maintained established human rights standards and even motivated some member states to strengthen their policies. Additionally, the redistributive implications of EU asylum policies have encouraged Southern and Eastern European states to adopt stronger positions on migration and asylum seekers' issues (Zaun, 2019). This paper in practice created a link between SDG targets 16.6 and 16.8, which envision transparent and robust institutions at all levels and increased participation of developing countries. These examples demonstrate how the research conducted by the European Institute has engaged with European policy-making institutions and their development over the years.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the European Institute is the ideal candidate to represent LSE at the upcoming High-Level Political Forum on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Institute's research strengths, research volume, and international pedigree make it the best candidate to provide expertise and advice to influence policies for implementing the SDGs. The EI's research contributions in the fields related to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) through its research on labor markets institutions, human rights, and institutional capacity are highly relevant. Focusing on these targets with research and effective impact on policymaking can help accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs. The EI is best placed to represent LSE at the HLPF due to its leadership in research in the global context. Therefore, the European Institute's expertise and contribution to policymaking cannot be overemphasized: its representation at the HLPF is highly recommended.