

## Review “A disruption of the sustainability transformation? Sustainability policy perspectives on the war in Ukraine”

On May 30th, the International Academy Transformation for Environment and Sustainability (TES) has launched its Virtual TES discussion series with the topic „The relevance of the war in Ukraine for transformation towards sustainability“. In our first event entitled “A disruption of the sustainability transformation? Sustainability policy perspectives on the war in Ukraine“, we inquired into the challenges Russia’s war on Ukraine poses for achieving international climate targets and the Sustainable Development Goals and discussed their implications for international sustainability policy. Imme Scholz (Heinrich-Böll Foundation) presented her perspectives in a keynote, followed by responses and a subsequent discussion with our panelists Harald Ginzky and Dirk Messner (German Environment Agency), Andriy Andrushevych (Resource & Analysis Center "Society and Environment"), and Andreas Kraemer (Ecologic Institute).

### Short summary:

All panelists agreed that the war in Ukraine adds to a series of previous crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected efforts to realize a sustainability transformation. Especially Western governments have so far failed to ‘use’ such crises to gear fiscal stimulus packages and subsidies toward a sustainability transformation, instead aiming at preserving the existing status quo and thereby continuing unsustainable pathways. In consequence, panelists considered current efforts to achieve a sustainable development insufficient and emphasized the general need to build more resilient, sustainable systems that could cope with future crises.

The war in Ukraine was considered particularly challenging in this regard, as it forces political decision makers to deal with and reconcile often conflicting interests in the face of collapsing supply chains, such as guaranteeing affordable access to energy while intending to reduce fossil fuel dependencies. Another tension might become increasingly visible between security and sustainability, given that the ongoing military conflict and the resulting military buildup absorbs enormous human, political and financial resources that cannot be spent for the sustainability transformation. Finally, the war in Ukraine casts new doubts on the future of globally orchestrated efforts to achieve a sustainable development and reach climate targets. On the one hand, it makes salient the need for developing preventive strategies enabling democratic countries to stand up to other aggressors today and in the future; on the other hand, it illustrates an increasing distrust toward the global North from Southern countries. Finding ways to (re-) build trust will be essential if global efforts toward sustainable development shall not be further put at risk.

*Disclaimer: The perspectives presented in the discussion are personal views and may not reflect the official perspective of the German Environment Agency*

**TES ACADEMY**  
International Academy  
Transformation for Environment  
and Sustainability

**German Environment Agency**  
Wörlitzer Platz 1  
06844 Dessau-Roßlau, Germany  
Tel.: +49(0)340 21 03-0  
[www.umweltbundesamt.de](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de)

The TES Academy is an in-house  
research project at UBA (duration  
2022 to 2024).