

ROMANIA'S KEY MESSAGES 2023

Humankind is facing unprecedented challenges today. The 2015 United Nations' adoption of programmatic policies to steer sustainable development was a crucial step towards addressing these challenges. However, halfway through the timeline, we have fallen short of meeting our objectives. Yet, there still is a chance to shift course if we act collectively as change-makers.

Besides institutional efforts, it has become clear that we must create a *critical mass* committed to transforming mindsets and embodying the values outlined in the 2030 Agenda. These governing principles have been present throughout history, and we can draw on various sources of wisdom and inspiration to guide us.

Since 1992, the year of *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, the five crucial attitudes for sustainability highlighted in the book *Beyond the Limits: Global Collapse or a Sustainable Future* were: Truth-telling, Visioning, Connecting, Learning, Love. Travelling in time, 16 years later, the five ways to happiness and wellbeing were identified as Notice!, Be Active!, Connect!, Learn! and Give!. And because sustainable development is all around us, Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, outlined five essential human development dimensions: Embrace reality; Uphold Justice/Solidarity; Foster Community and Cooperation; Encourage Intelligence/Innovation; and Practice Love.

Achieving sustainable future rests on our ability to actualize a holistic vision embodying these principles, through leadership and cooperation.

Romania reaffirms its strong commitment to pursuing SDGs and its dedication to being a proactive partner and a regional hub. The Department of Sustainable Development, established in 2017 and placed under the Prime Minister's authority, serves as a robust entity for coordinating the national implementation of the 17 SDGs.

Following the release of its first VNR in 2018, Romania took a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, addressing all 17 SDGs, by adopting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030. In 2022, Romania developed the National Action Plan to implement the Strategy, providing a 2030 roadmap, prioritizing strengthening and improving governance framework, raising awareness through education and training, promoting sustainable development principles, monitoring and evaluating the progress.

To monitor and evaluate Romania's progress in implementing the Strategy, 99 national indicators are overseen by the National Institute of Statistics. These indicators are linked to EUROSTAT indicators or correspond to global indicators of the 2030 Agenda.

To facilitate the implementation of sustainable development principles in the business sector and fulfill the targets outlined in the Strategy, Romania has developed in 2022 the Romanian Sustainability Code. Moreover, an open-data platform has been established to enable reporting entities to share reports and sustainability best practices.

Romania has established a comprehensive governance structure to pursue SDGs, based on multi-level decision-making and cross-sectoral collaboration, which has been endorsed by the OECD.

The highest level of decision-making is represented by the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, comprising all ministers and presided over by the Prime Minister, inter-institutional structure overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and review of the Strategy.

For interlinkage and policy coherence, Romania has established 22 sustainable development hubs in all ministries, composed of 90 specialists, which are the same regardless of the electoral cycles. The *sustainable development expert* for public administration is officially recognized in Romania, a unique approach at the EU level. The first 150 experts completed the training program in 2022, and the target is to train 2,000 experts by 2026.

The Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, composed of 34 specialists from academia, research, and civil society provides guidance to the Department for the Strategy implementation and indicators monitoring.

The Coalition *Sustainable Romania* is a private initiative serving as a discussion partner for representative segments of civil society, contributing to the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy.

As a recognition of innovation and excellence in 2030 Agenda implementation, in 2021, the Department was honored with the UN DESA award for *Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs*.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, Romania has achieved 58.2% progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, but more effort is needed to ensure successful fulfillment.

Alongside all institutional efforts, sustainable development is about people and requires passion, determination, and hope. Romania is committed to maintaining its position as a regional hub of good practices, but especially as a devoted friend to those working towards the *Future we want*.