Implementing the 17 SDGs

Government of Romania
Department of Sustainable Development
www.dezvoltaredurabila.gov.ro

Report to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development
New York, July 2023
The Voluntary National Review presented in this document highlights the progress made at national level in terms of the structure of governance and implementation evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the actual progress in achieving some of them.

The data in the report is a mirror of the current situation that must incentivize us to accelerate our efforts for a sustainable Romania, European Union and world. There are only seven years left until 2030, when the global stocktake on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals will take place. This decade must be a genuine decade of action.

The report comes with a number of recommendations at the end, which need implementation without hesitation and which are also included in the policy documents prepared by the Presidential Administration in recent years. Promoting climate and sustainable development education, the preparation and training of sustainable development experts, including at the level of public administration, supporting and stimulating businesses and civil society in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the better use of available green finance are key to achieving national sustainability ambitions.
Over the past five years, I have had the privilege of coordinating the national effort to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Romania. The second Voluntary National Review exemplifies our comprehensive approach to translating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into tangible actions at the national level.

Our implementation vision, as outlined in the report, is holistic, with centralized government coordination and a robust, inter-institutional structure. While our technical work focuses on monitoring indicators and aligning public policies, we must never lose sight of the true purpose behind our efforts. In my view, our aim is to embody the timeless universal principles that have guided humanity since the earliest civilizations. Thus, this document not only presents data but also carries powerful symbolic significance.

The creation of the second Voluntary National Review presented a valuable opportunity for extensive dialogue with all segments of society. These consultations serve as a means to gather positive energy and channel it towards mobilizing society for the mindset shift required to ensure a sustainable future by 2030.
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Summary

Romanian sustainability

Romania presents in 2023 its second Voluntary National Review, developed under the coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development | Government of Romania, an entity set up at the centre of government with the aim to ensure the alignment of policies and measures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national level.

Romania’s first Voluntary National Review provided information on the institutional architecture for sustainable development at the time and on the 2030 Agenda’s implementation process, with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals subject to detailed analysis at the HLPF 2018, namely SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 15 and SDG 17. The review also presented the progress reflected by the analysis of indicators in several sectors and the vision for the way forward, in the spirit of “leave no one behind”.

The second Voluntary National Review presents Romania’s significant progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The review describes the robust multi-level governance structure, the efforts to strengthen mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, national and regional partnerships, and the current state of play for all 17 SDGs. To support SDGs’ achievement, Romania has contextualised the 2030 Agenda through the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030, whose implementation is facilitated by the National Action Plan and the set of 291 National Indicators for Sustainable Development.

Voluntary National Review 2023 was drafted during a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory process, similar to those that underpinned the elaboration of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 and the National Action Plan. In parallel with the Voluntary National Review development, other important documents were produced, such as a voluntary subnational report on mapping the SDGs at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania, a Youth Statement expressing support for the 2030 Agenda, as well as the Children’s Voice on SDGs implementation in Romania.

The integrated, indivisible and interconnected nature of the SDGs is reflected by the entire structure of the governance framework for sustainable development and is operationalised through the network of sustainable development hubs set up at line ministry level, coordinated from the centre of the government through the Department of Sustainable Development.

The presentation of each SDG includes Romania’s response to the crises that impacted our society and in particular the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the Government’s response to the “leave no one behind” principle and actions to enhance the resilience of vulnerable groups. There was a special focus to reflect the links between the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. For each SDG, various stakeholders contributed with examples of good practices to enhance community resilience to different pressures. The Voluntary National Review development process was an opportunity to engage all segments of society to accelerate the broad partnership for the successful implementation of the SDGs.
Key messages

2015 was a turning point for humanity and Romania alike. Crucial events brought countries together, and the consensus expressed set the premises for a common global agenda of action until 2030:

- The April 2016 Declaration of the Romanian Parliament draws courses of action by adapting working structures for the coherent and unitary approach on SDGs in parliamentary work, the fulfilment of a strategic framework for cross-sectoral coordination at the level of ministries and the establishment of a coordinating body under the direct authority of the Prime Minister.
- The main role of the Department of Sustainable Development, established in 2017 under the Prime Minister Office, is to provide national coordination for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to report on progress made.
- Key strategic documents were adopted in 2022, creating the legal prerequisites for aligning public policies and decisions in support of the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a response to the social, economic and environmental problems of the world, and implicitly of Romania, and the 17 SDGs represent a framework to enable the transition to a sustainable economy.

Romania is at the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, assumed by the Romanian Government, in the spirit of the Parliament’s Declaration on the Sustainable Development Goals in April 2016.

The implementation of a holistic vision encompassing the principles of the 2030 Agenda requires:

- Political Will
- Vision
- Coordination at the Centre of Government
- Policy Coherence and Budgeting for Sustainable Development
- Inter-institutional Network
- Key Sectoral Coordination
- Progress Monitoring

According to Romania’s experience, the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires:

- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Partnerships
- Collaboration
- Action
- Efficiency

The 2030 Agenda requires:

- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- Addis Ababa Action Agenda
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- New York, UN General Assembly
- A global framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with the economic, social and environmental priorities
- September 2015
- Paris Agreement on climate change
- December 2015
- The April 2016 Declaration
- The role of the Department of Sustainable Development
- Key strategic documents
- Inter-institutional Network
- The centre of government
- A set of National Indicators for Sustainable Development

Open Data Platform

The web platform Sustainable Romania provides statistical data on objective indicators, and also subjective indicators measuring public perception on the SDGs, with open data access.

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development

Steps are being taken to develop a Centre of Excellence as an innovative institution for research, education and dialogue on sustainable development, with branches in the 8 development regions of Romania, to align public policies and decisions in support of the SDGs.

Critical Mass

In addition to the institutional dimension, a critical mass of people is necessary to change mindsets and to act in the spirit of sustainable development principles.

Sustainable development is far and about people, and all these institutional efforts that Romania has made and continues to make will not be sufficient if they are not pursued with passion, determination and, above all, hope.

Romania is determined to remain a regional hub for best practices and for the promotion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADRI</td>
<td>Associazione Donne Romene in Italia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANAR</td>
<td>National Administration of Romanian Waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANES</td>
<td>National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men in Romania</td>
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<tr>
<td>AROP</td>
<td>At-risk-of poverty rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>AROPE</td>
<td>At-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate</td>
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<td>CF</td>
<td>Cohesion Fund</td>
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<td>Code</td>
<td>Romanian Sustainability Code</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>Department</td>
<td>Department of Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ERDF</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUROSTAT</td>
<td>European Statistical Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAV</td>
<td>Gross Value Added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGSA</td>
<td>General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCE</td>
<td>Institute for Circular Economy and Environment Erleșia Uțârăl</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>LED</td>
<td>Light-emitting diode</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Young people neither in employment nor in education or training</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRRP</td>
<td>National Reform and Resilience Plan</td>
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<td>NSCE</td>
<td>National Strategy for Circular Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official development assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PCSD</td>
<td>Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDI</td>
<td>Research, Development, Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>p.p.</td>
<td>Percentage point</td>
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<tr>
<td>RoAid</td>
<td>Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RoAlert</td>
<td>System operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs an used in major situatons to alert population</td>
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<td>RDWL</td>
<td>Asociația Romanian Women’s Lobby</td>
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<td>SDG(s)</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal(s)</td>
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<td>IEEE</td>
<td>Electronic Monitoring Information System</td>
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<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030</td>
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<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS</td>
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<td>UN DESA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNECE</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nation Refugee Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAT</td>
<td>Value Added Tax</td>
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<td>VNR</td>
<td>Voluntary National Review</td>
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**INTRODUCTION**

Five years after its first Voluntary National Review, Romania conveys itself to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with a remarkable progress made as a result of the national commitment to support the 2030 Agenda. Romania presents the results and challenges in achieving the SDGs, the governance framework and institutional mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, response to crisis situations and support to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups, as well as, best practices of institutions and civil society engaged in implementing sustainable development.

Adopted in November 2018, under the coordination of the Department for sustainable development, response to crisis situations and support framework and institutional mechanisms to ensure policy coherence commitment to support the 2030 Agenda. Romania presents the with a remarkable progress made as a result of the national itself to the High

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Adopted in November 2018, under the coordination of the Department for Sustainable Development, the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 defines, in Chapter III Implementation and Monitoring, the entire governance framework for achieving the 17 SDGs, contextualized at the national level.

“A successful implementation requires a consolidated legislative and institutional framework with functional mechanisms and clearly defined roles.”

The construction of the implementation and monitoring framework of the Strategy has put into practice through the SIPOCA Project 613 Sustainable Romania, co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Administrative Capacity Operational Program 2014-2020, in the effort to strengthen the governance framework for sustainable development, starting with 2019.

New decision-making and expertise bodies have been created: The Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, the Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development and the Coalition Sustainable Romania. Powerful working tools such as the National Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, the Occupational Standard for Expert of Sustainable Development profession, the set of National Indicators for Sustainable Development 2030, the Aggregator Sustainable Romania - open data platform and the Romanian Code of Sustainability, which involve the whole society in the journey towards sustainable development, at all levels, from the government to the citizen are now in place.

The SDGs governance framework pictures both, the aspect of continuity and progress since the first Voluntary National Review and is discussed in full in the institutional framework and enabling policies on the 2030 Agenda chapter.

For the Strength4ED-SDGs governance framework, in recognition of innovation and excellence in public administration as well as for a significant contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the UN DESA nominated the Government of Romania, through the Department of Sustainable Development, as the 2021 winner in the category Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs.

Over the past five years, halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Romania has taken on board the role of a regional hub in promoting the SDGs, as part of the 2030 Agenda implementation process coordinated from the centre of the government level. Romania has implemented projects in partnership with prestigious international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, and has joined professional networks with top-level expertise, such as the European Sustainable Development Network and the European Network of Sustainable Development and Environment Advisory Councils. Last but not least, Romania had an active presence in the most important UN events related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, namely the High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regional Forum, Stockholm ‘50, United Nations Conference on Water.

Similar to the process that supported the approval of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and its National Action Plan, the process of the Voluntary National Review was extensively participative, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder. Representatives of ministries and other central public institutions, local authorities, regional development agencies, academia and universities, national research and development institutes, employers’ associations and trade unions, private sector, non-governmental organisations and associations and other segments of civil society, as well as interested citizens actively participated and were involved in the review process. The Methodology and process of preparing the review chapter provides specifics on how the process was carried out.

The review was addressed to all 17 SDGs, contextualised to the national specifics through the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, taking into account the associated national targets, the policies and programmes that support them and the civil society response. For mapping each SDG, the associated indicators have been analysed since 2016. According to the National Institute of Statistics’ evaluation, Romania has achieved 62.7% of the SDGs, however significant challenges remaining. If better results are registered especially in terms of the decrease in poverty rate, the increase in the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption, simultaneously with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Romania needs to accelerate its efforts to succeed in changing the current trend and reach some targets regarding SDG 4, SDG 6 or SDG 12. Crisis situations and measures to leave no one behind were also addressed in the SDGs assessment from chapter of implementation of the 17 SDGs in Romania, that outlines the current situation.

Similar evaluation processes, on a local scale, were carried out in parallel with the Voluntary National Review process. Categories in society were involved in the development of the Children’s Report on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Youth Declaration and the Voluntary Subnational Report that incorporate relevant perspectives from society, other than those included in the SDG assessment, as well as future challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

With the presentation of the second Voluntary National Review, Romania reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through its institutional framework and the instruments it has developed, Romania has succeeded in creating an enabling context for the implementation of the 17 SDGs. The process of drafting the Voluntary National Review included an honest assessment of the current situation, remaining challenges and next steps, in collaboration with the network of national stakeholders involved in the implementation of the SDGs.

The way to a sustainable future is ensured by continuing to adopt a proactive approach of incorporating whole of society and a global collaboration in the spirit of intergenerational solidarity advancing on the path towards a sustainable future.
Romania's journey towards sustainability

April 18
The Parliament of Romania was the first of the 196 parliaments of the Inter-parliamentary Union to express its support for the 2030 Agenda, through the joint declaration of the assembled chambers.

November 09
The Government of Romania decides to adopt the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, drawn up under the direct coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development.

May 02
The Government of Romania decides to establish the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, which includes 24 experts covering all 17 SDGs.

June 08
The Government of Romania decides to adopt the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, drawn up under the direct coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development.

Instruments:
- 69 National Indicators for Sustainable Development
- Sustainable Romania – SDGs open data platform
- 70 experts of sustainable development
- Romanian Code of Sustainability

September 25
Romania, next to 192 Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, adopts the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Transforming our world.

May 25
The Government of Romania decides to establish the Department of Sustainable Development, under the Prime Minister, as the national coordinator in implementing the set of 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

May 08
The Government of Romania decides to establish the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, which includes all ministers chaired by Prime Minister.

December, 02
UN Public Service Award StrenghtRO-SDGs

April 13
The Department of Sustainable Development initiated the Coalition Sustainable Romania which brought together representative organizations of civil society and the private sector.

May 25
The Department of Sustainable Development sets up the network of 22 hubs for sustainable development in all ministries, with approx. 90 specialists.

1st VNR

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2nd VNR
2 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR REVIEW PREPARATION

WORKING METHODOLOGY

The Department of Sustainable Development coordinated the preparation and drafting of the second Voluntary National Review. A core team was constituted, charged with developing an implementation strategy and deadlines, resources and responsibilities. Stakeholders were identified, working groups were created and the consultation and communication strategy, the stakeholder engagement plan for VNR preparation and drafting of the second Voluntary National Review. A consolidated draft of the second VNR was submitted to all stakeholders for final consultations, to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development’s acceptance decision, and then to the Prime minister of Romania for approval before submission to the United Nations in June 2023.

The Department team also had the task to establish the communication strategy, the stakeholder engagement plan for VNR development, the consultation timeline and gathering of all information and inputs to review progress made in the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation. The communication tools used were press releases published on the Department and partners’ websites; announcements published on Facebook, institutional communication channels; online and in person events and workshops.

For the purposes of drafting the working methodology, Department representatives participated in all training and best practice exchange sessions organised by UN DESA on VNR development with the support of the host countries, from October 2022 to April 2023.

In addition to the first report of 2018, Romania’s second VNR provides an assessment of the accomplishments of all 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, contextualized at the national level. As the first report on all 17 SDGs, the review took 2016 as a baseline year, and was integrated and linked with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The national Institute of Statistics started as early as 2019, after the approval of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, for the establishment of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development. The National Institute of Statistics supported the Department of Sustainable Development in drafting regular progress reports on the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, informed by national statistical data, updated and disaggregated, as appropriate, according to relevant national characteristics. The progress reports were published on the Department of Sustainable Development and National Institute of Statistics websites and presented to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development and to the Committee for Sustainable Development of the Romanian Parliament.

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

All ministerial areas were involved in the VNR development process, represented by the experts of the Hubs for Sustainable Development Network set up in line ministries and other central public authorities. The Hubs for Sustainable Development contribution were crucial in the review process, to enable a snapshot and overall picture on the national sectoral policies, strategies and plans that support sustainable development policy coherence and the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

During the development process, the Hubs for Sustainable Development contributed to the development of a common working tool, the SDGs Matrix, an updated version of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development, linked to global indicators where appropriate, policies, strategies and action plans at national level that support the correspondence of targets, as assumed in the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy.

WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH

Following the dissemination campaigns of the 2030 Agenda and the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, the Department has a database of more than 1,000 sustainable development supporters at national level, ranging from universities, national research and development institutes, local public authorities, regional and local associations, businesses, entrepreneurs, social partners, youth organisations, students and children, NGOs and civil society organisations, including vulnerable groups. Among them, as well as the representatives of Consultative Council for Sustainable Development and Coalition Sustainable Romania, were engaged by the Department of Sustainable Development in an active dialogue and collaboration throughout the VNR drafting period.

National Statistics

Throughout this process, the review benefited from the expertise provided by National Institute of Statistics specialists and relies mainly on national statistical data. Systematic cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics started as early as 2019, after the approval of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, for the establishment of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development. The analysis and selection of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development engaged both National Institute of Statistics and central public authorities and other agencies and organisations, providers of national statistical data, as well as the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development. After the set of indicators was defined, Department facilitated the signing of tripartite collaboration agreements between the Secretariat – General of the Government, National Institute of Statistics and ministries/government agencies/organisations, whereby the parties committed to contribute consistently high-quality data to strengthen the national statistics system for sustainable development.

The National Institute of Statistics supported the Department of Sustainable Development in drafting regular progress reports on the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, informed by national statistical data, updated and disaggregated, as appropriate, according to relevant national characteristics. The progress reports were published on the Department of Sustainable Development and National Institute of Statistics websites and presented to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development and the Committee for Sustainable Development of the Romanian Parliament.

DRAFTING PROCESS

The VNR development process was initiated in June 2022 with the official launch of the National Action Plan for the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation. The national communication of Romania’s commitment to present the VNR at the HLPF 2023 continued with the workshops organised in the eight development regions, a specific action of the National Action Plan, between November 2022 and February 2023.

Stakeholders were identified and invited to nominate their representatives in the working groups for VNR development between September and November 2022.

The first joint meeting of the working groups was held in December 2022 and was attended in person by over 120 people, both decision-makers and technical experts. The goal of this meeting was to present the timetable of activities, the report structure and the specific tools, the necessary involvement and the working groups already in place. The tools, communication and work timetable were also presented.

A virtual working platform was created for participants in the co-creation of the Sustainable Development Strategy and the VNR, the Department of Sustainable Development and Coalition Sustainable Romania, provided the children with the necessary background information for discussions on the different SDGs. The Children’s Voice on SDGs implementation, a focus on those issues that are important for them, is a report designed and written by children. Adults only had a facilitating role in the process and provided the children with the necessary background information for discussions on the different SDGs.

The Children’s Report is a summary of the views, ideas and proposals generated by discussions spread over multiple stages of the process.

VOLUNTARY REVIEWS

Children’s Voice

The Children’s Report for Romania’s Voluntary National Review is the voice of children on SDGs implementation, with a focus on those issues that are important for them. It is a report designed and written by children. Adults only had a facilitating role in the process and provided the children with the necessary background information for discussions on the different SDGs.
Two online meetings attended by 13 children from seven NGOs, student associations, the Children’s Board and five Local Children’s Councils, supported by the UNICEF Representative in Romania. Children discussed SDG 3 and SDG 11, April 2023.

Children’s voice in the process of drafting the Children’s Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the participation of 16 children from seven NGOs, student associations and the Children’s Board. The process was coordinated by the UNICEF Representative in Romania and Save the Children Romania. The children discussed the rights of the child, education, leisure and recreational activities; inclusion of vulnerable groups; climate change; health; digitalisation, which are directly linked to SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11, March 2023.

Children’s views, statements and positions expressed in public debates, consultations, reports, surveys, mechanisms for child participation in decision-making, organized by the UNICEF Representative in Romania and Save the Children Romania, with the participation of more than 55,000 children.

For the first time, Romania’s VNR includes the position of young people in support of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development at community, regional and national levels, reflected by the Youth Statement on Romania’s Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Young people’s initiative to collaborate on the Statement reflected their awareness of the importance of active engagement in building the future, including by personal and professional upskilling.

The data collection process consisted of three group meetings with participating youth organisations, where specific objectives were proposed and monitored to create the concept paper. The discussion platform also served as a space for co-creation and alignment of youth organisations in the actual writing and formatting process.

Throughout this process, youth organisations had opportunities to inspire each other, to share good practice examples and, in the long term, to collaborate in concrete actions, projects or initiatives on topics of common interest: climate action, health and well-being, and quality education. This collaboration also provided an opportunity for conversation, especially on current challenges faced by young people in Romania.

The following youth organisations contributed: UN Youth Association from Romania, with national coverage, the Romanian Youth Council which brings together federative structures with a network of over 400 youth organisations in the country, the only structure in Romania affiliated to the European Youth Forum and the World Assembly of Youth, the League of Romanian Students Abroad which has built a community of over 10,000 members, with representatives in over 50 countries, the Union of Students from Romania which brings together 104 youth organisations from the whole country.

### Subnational Review

The Romanian Municipalities Association and the Association of Communes of Romania, under the coordination of representatives of United Cities and Local Governments and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, has initiated, in parallel, the elaboration of the Voluntary sub-national review: Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania.

The subnational report is a powerful local awareness raising tool that help to improve policy-making process and stimulate bottom-up transformation. During the process of developing the subnational report there was a close collaboration between coordinating entities at local level and Department of Sustainable Development, to harmonize efforts and ensure complementarity with RNVs.

The report was developed between January and May 2023. The methodology included the collection and primary analysis of qualitative and quantitative data at the level of municipalities and communes. In Romania regarding two major thematic categories: sustainable development goals and enabling policy framework.

The report includes:

- The contribution of municipalities and communes to the implementation of SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, depending on the relevance for the area of responsibility of the local public administrations. The contribution consisted of projects carried out and subsumed to the respective SDGs, regardless of their degree of knowledge, or formalization at the level of development strategies at the local level.

- Perceptions, opinions and social representations of representatives of municipalities and communes regarding the most important local SDGs, the SDGs degree of knowledge and acceptance by local authorities, as well as the blocking factors for the implementation of development projects at the local level. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and response policies at the local level were considered.

The goal of the subnational report was to reflect the contribution of municipalities and communes to SDGs achievement, especially in areas where there is no aggregated statistical or administrative data at local level. The report presented the progress made by local authorities at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania, for the localization of the SDGs through the completed projects; information on good practices or successful projects at local level was included.

### Exchange of best practices with Italy facilitated by OECD

In November 2021, representatives of Department of Sustainable Development, Secretariat - General of the Government and experts from Romanian ministries, members of the Hubs for Sustainable Development, and representatives of the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security participated in a peer learning session on Mechanisms and tools for addressing National Action Plan bottlenecks. The OECD-facilitated workshop aimed at presenting and discussing mechanisms and tools to support policy coherence for sustainable development for the implementation of national sustainable development strategies in Italy and Romania on three levels: vision and leadership, institutional mechanisms, financing policies and impact assessment.

### Round table at the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

In March 2021, Romania in partnership with OECD organised a round table on Aligning the European Recovery and Resilience Plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of policy coherence and public service leaders, occasioned by the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development in Geneva.

Discussions and best practice exchanges focused on the challenges of harmonising policies to align recovery plans after COVID-19 in the region with SDG policies, including the role of policy coherence in supporting green and digital transitions and resilience in general. The institutional mechanisms, civil servants’ skills and institutional capacities needed to ensure sustainable recovery were explored.

### Dialogue and Exchange of Lessons Learned with Other Countries

Romania developed best practice models in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and shared such models with regional and international partners. Also, in order to broaden its experience, Romania participated in best practice exchanges and partnerships, prior to the preparation of the VNR development process, to learn from the experience of other countries engaged in the SDGs implementation.

Representatives of the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Council also participated in the meeting, delivered messages. The Deputy Director of the S&D EU Green Deal Department presented the European Union project Planning the EU Voluntary Review in 2023, support for drafting the voluntary progress report at the European level in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, for HLPF 2023.

In November 2022 and January 2023 in the ad-hoc EU Voluntary Reviewworkshops organized by the Commission for Member States, for information, clarification and feedback purposes on the content of the Report.

### Exchanges of best practices with partner countries in European Sustainable Development Network

In June 2022, the Romanian Government, together with the European Sustainable Development Network and the European Environment Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Networks, organized the Romanian Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels the 7th ESDN Peer Learning platform Voluntary National Reviews: Challenges, Successes and Lessons Learned.

The goal was to facilitate learning from one another by exchanging examples of good practices between policymakers in Europe, with a focus on voluntary national reviews. Examples of good practices for voluntary reporting were shared by representatives of UNECE, Republic of Finland with the experience of preparing the second VNR in 2021, Satsz Confederation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands with the second VNR prepared for July 2022.

### Romania at the EU Voluntary Review workshops organized by the Commission for Member States

In 2021, the Council of the EU invited the European Commission and the European External Action Service to prepare the first EU Voluntary Review and to present it at the 2021 HLPF. EU Voluntary Review is an important milestone illustrating how the actions taken by the EU and the Member States deliver on the SDGs in the EU and beyond. EU VR drew from Member States experiences.

In June 2022, Romania submitted a national consolidated contribution by filling in a questionnaire for Member States, on general SDG implementation, external actions beyond EU borders, with a focus on supporting partner countries in implementing the SDGs, activities on policy coherence for development, by addressing impacts of policies on developing countries. Moreover, Romania participated between November 2022 and January 2023 in the 4 ad-hoc EU Voluntary Reviewworkshops organized by the Commission for Member States, for information, clarification and feedback purposes on the content of the Report.
**VNR PREPARATION PROCESS**

**SEP**
- Official invitation
- Scanning the stakeholders for the consultation process
- Participation at the Virtual Introduction Webinar for the VNRs, 26-27 October 2022
- The ministries were invited to nominate their official representatives in the VNR drafting process
  - official letters
  - data base
  - correspondence with UN
  - planning activities
- Communication in the regions
- Peer learning with Italy facilitated by the OECD, 29 November 2022
- The working tools for the VNR drafting were created
  - reference documents database
  - open data platform
  - virtual common work platform
  - individualized work space for each stakeholder
- Preparation of the consultation process

**OCT**
- Preparation of the consultation process
- Virtual participation to the First Global Workshop for the VNRs, Torino, Italy, 6-7 December 2022
- The process was officially launched on 14 December 2022, in Bucharest
- The participants were invited to join the construction of SDGs MATRIX working groups
- Launching the consultation process

**NOV**
- Individual consultation with stakeholders
- Communication in the regions
- Youth organizations have started the consultation process for the elaboration of the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- It have started the process of drafting the first voluntary stand-alone report in Romania on the SDGs
- Drafting VNR: preparation for presentation
- In-person consultations in the thematic working groups

**DEC**
- SDGs data analysis
- Finalizing the consultation process
- All stakeholders were involved in drafting SDGs
- UNICEF Romania joined ESG in order to highlight the voice of children in Romania regarding the implementation of the SDGs
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- In person participation to the Second Global VNR Preparatory workshop, Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 April 2023
- It was finalized the CHILDREN’S Report: for Romania’s Voluntary National Review
- It was finalized the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- Key messages were submitted to UN DESA via the Romanian Mission to the UN
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material

**JAN**
- Finalizing the consultation process
- In person participation to the Second Global VNR Preparatory workshop, Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 April 2023
- It was finalized the CHILDREN’S Report: for Romania’s Voluntary National Review
- It was finalized the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- Key messages were submitted to UN DESA via the Romanian Mission to the UN
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material

**FEB**
- In-person consultations in the thematic working groups
- The participants were scanned and drafted the SDGs presentation format
- Drafting VNR: preparation for presentation
- Preparing for VNR presentation

**MAR**
- Drafting VNR: preparation for presentation
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material

**APR**
- Final Workshop for the VNR drafting process was held on 16 May 2023, in Bucharest
- VNR Draft 2 was submitted for approval on the Interdepartmental Committee on 17 May 2023
- It was finalized the First Voluntary Stand-Alone Report from Romania on the SDGs
- Finalizing the consultation process

**MAY**
- Finalizing the consultation process
- In person participation to the Second Global VNR Preparatory workshop, Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 April 2023
- It was finalized the CHILDREN’S Report: for Romania’s Voluntary National Review
- It was finalized the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- Key messages were submitted to UN DESA via the Romanian Mission to the UN
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material

**JUN**
- Finalizing the consultation process
- In person participation to the Second Global VNR Preparatory workshop, Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 April 2023
- It was finalized the CHILDREN’S Report: for Romania’s Voluntary National Review
- It was finalized the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- Key messages were submitted to UN DESA via the Romanian Mission to the UN
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material

**JUL**
- Finalizing the consultation process
- In person participation to the Second Global VNR Preparatory workshop, Sofia, Bulgaria, 4-5 April 2023
- It was finalized the CHILDREN’S Report: for Romania’s Voluntary National Review
- It was finalized the Youth Declaration regarding Romania’s VNR
- Key messages were submitted to UN DESA via the Romanian Mission to the UN
- Preparing for VNR presentation
- It was submitted the VNR to UN DESA
- There were submitted the audio-video material
**INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES ON THE 2030 AGENDA**

**SDGs COORDINATION AT THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL**

Romania has made significant progress in achieving the SDGs since the previous review, due to the national institutional framework established for implementation, which reflects such progress. In 2018, sustainable development was still a shared responsibility between the national and local levels, with a robust entity created at the centre of Government in 2017 under the coordination of the Minister of Environment and the Department of Sustainable Development, coordinated by a State Counsellor, within the Romanian Government.

Taking over the national coordination of the implementation of the 17 SDGs by the Department of Sustainable Development, a robust entity created at the centre of Government in 2017 under the coordination of the Prime Minister, has accelerated the achievement of the governance framework for strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development, demonstrating government-wide ownership of the 2030 Agenda.

**Box 1 Tasks of the Department of Sustainable Development**

- To coordinate the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation activities, resulting from the set of 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- To plan and integrate data and information communicated by the institutions responsible for sustainable development.
- To identify the most effective actions to implement the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy.
- To generate suggestions for national SDG targets adjustment.
- To monitor the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation based on the National Indicators for Sustainable Development.
- To submit annual reports on Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation to the Government and the Parliament.
- To represent in relation with ministries, public administration authorities, and with Romanian and foreign natural and legal persons.
- To cooperate with the bodies in charge with Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, and with specialist structures of the Romanian Parliament and the Presidential Administration, other public or private institutions, NGOs and international organisations in the field.
- To coordinate regular reporting to High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

**GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Starting from 2019, the Department initiated the construction of the governance framework as set out in Chapter IV of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy. It also initiated the process of designing and strengthening mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development so as to support the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

By developing the SDGs governance strategy and institutional framework, the Government of Romania aimed to become a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at national and regional levels. In order to advance the dissemination and implementation of sustainable development principles and the achievement of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy targets in the business sector, the Department identified the need to develop a sustainability code, which would incentivize and support companies to produce sustainability reports. In 2022, the Department coordinated the development of the Romanian Sustainability Code and its Guide, which offered interested parties explicit information on content standards and on the process of producing sustainability reports. Consultation sessions as representatives from the industry, the Coalition Sustainable Romania, academia, employers’ associations and federations from various economic sectors, businesses, financial institutions, banks, and public institutions engaged in the non-financial financial reporting process were held throughout the drafting process.

In order to facilitate the reporting process and to ensure transparency, the Romanian Sustainability Code Platform was created to publish reports and records of reporting entities, to provide access to best practices related to sustainability that can inspire other entities. The Platform provides open data information to support investors or other financial or commercial decision-makers based on the sustainability practices of reporting companies.

**Institutional framework for sustainable development**

*Source: The Romanian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development*

**Meeting of Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development**

28 December 2021

*Nicolae-Andrei Ciucă, Prime Minister, Government of Romania*

**Institutional framework for sustainable development**

*Source: The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development*

**Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development**

It was set up in 2019, chaired by the Prime Minister, and includes all ministers of the Government. The Committee is an advisory inter-institutional body which follows up the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, monitoring and review processes. From 2019, the Department provides the permanent secretariat of it. Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development convenes in annual meetings at the initiative of the Department.

**Box 2 Tasks of the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development**

- To follow up the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, monitoring and review processes.
- To advance the integration of the principles and SDGs into all national policies, programmes, plans and strategies.
- To propose for approval the Action Plan for the Strategy implementation.
- To provide advisory opinions on the Department’s annual report on the Strategy implementation, before being presented in the Parliament.
- To propose improvements of the legal and institutional framework to enforce Romania’s international commitments in the field of sustainable development.
- To ensure the Strategy consistency with other international programmatic or policy documents in the field of sustainable development.
- To coordinate the development of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development, to endorses it and to propose updates.

**Meeting of Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development**

28 December 2021

*Nicolae-Andrei Ciucă, Prime Minister, Government of Romania*

**Institutional framework for sustainable development**

*Source: The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development*

**Meeting of Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development**

28 December 2021

*Nicolae-Andrei Ciucă, Prime Minister, Government of Romania*

**Institutional framework for sustainable development**

*Source: The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development*
The Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development, set up in 2016 as part of the Committee for Foreign Policy of the Chamber of Deputies, supports policy coherence for sustainable development and provides a framework for debate to monitor the state of implementation of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and of other public policies that may contribute to sustainable development. The Sub-Committee advances legislative initiatives to support Romania’s sustainable transformation, analyses such draft legislation in view of their impact on the sustainable development goals, and, where appropriate, submits review or adjustment proposals to the Committees concerned. This structure is a bridge between Department of Sustainable Development and the Parliament of Romania.

Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development

The Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development was set up in 2019 upon Department of Sustainable Development initiative, with the support of all ministries and other central public authorities and comprises 22 hubs with approx. 90 experts in sectoral areas. The structure of the Hubs network was designed as a construct of sustainable development sectors that transcends impending changes associated with electoral cycles or changes in government institutions, allowing harmonisation of policy coherence for sustainable development and continuity. Each hub consists of existing technical staff from the central public administration and is responsible for driving and monitoring SDGs implementation in the specific field of institution. The Hubs of Sustainable Development are ongoing building and permanent dialog partners for Department for Sustainable Development and National Institute for Statistics in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The structure of the Hubs network guarantees that the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the SDGs are addressed in a holistic manner through cross-sectoral policy harmonisation, in a joint effort to implement Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy.

Consulative Council for Sustainable Development

It was established in 2020 to ensure consistent participation of representatives of academia, research organisations and civil society in the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation. The role of the Council is to propose the initiation and development of programmatic documents and methodologies for Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation. The Council consists of 34 specialists with expertise in the 17 SDGs and provides advice to Department of Sustainable Development starting from 2021. The Department provides the permanent secretariat of the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development.

Task of the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development

First meeting of Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, 31 August 2021

Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Box 3: Activities of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development
- To develop reports and recommendations on public policies for sustainable development in Romania
- To organise public debates and hearings on sustainable development issues
- To promote cooperation between public institutions, the private sector and civil society for sustainable development
- To participate in international conferences and events on sustainable development and exchange of best practices
- To cooperate with other parliamentary structures and international organisations to promote sustainable development
- To develop draft legislation and amendments to existing legislation to ensure sustainable development in Romania

Box 5: Sectoral areas of the Hubs for Sustainable Development
- Foreign Affairs
- Home Affairs
- Agriculture
- Defence
- Transport and Communications
- Water and Forests
- Culture
- Research
- Economics
- Regional Development
- Education
- Energy
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Tourism
- Public Finance
- European Funds
- Justice
- Environmental Protection
- Business Environment
- Labour and Social Protection
- Youth and Sport
- Transport and Internal Trade
- Waste and Water
- Development

Box 4: Tasks of the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development
- To conduct surveys, research, analyses and to participate in debates on 2030 Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation
- To develop opinions and draft legislation on priority areas of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy
- To provide support for streamlining of the National Statistical System by National Indicators of Sustainable Development
- To cooperate with public or private institutions and bodies in the field of sustainable development
- To cooperate with national and international partners in the field e.g., European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network

National Institute of Statistics

Official statistics in Romania are organised and coordinated by the National Institute of Statistics, a specialist body of the central public administration, subordinated to the Romanian Government and under the coordination of the Prime Minister. National Institute of Statistics ensures the comparability and compatibility of national statistical information with the information produced by European statistics, collaborating with EUROSTAT, with other statistical offices of European countries, and with specialist UN and international bodies.

Box 6: Tasks of the National Institute of Statistics
- To develop the system of statistical indicators, calculation methodologies, technologies and specific standards for obtaining indicators
- To design, implement and operate the statistical information system
- To collect, process and store data and information for statistical databases
- To organise and conduct statistical research and to develop economic and social surveys and analyses
- To inform the public and public authorities on economic and social developments at national level
- To approve methodologies for statistical surveys organised by public institutions and services

The allocation of human resources, their empowerment and the development of a cross-ministerial technical communication network are prerequisites for the success of the transformational process needed in the central public administration to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development to shift from “silo” approaches to “cooperation, coordination and collaboration” approaches.

In recognition of the contribution of public institutions personnel to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a new occupation was introduced in 2018 in the Classification of Occupations in Romania, expert of sustainable development, a unique approach in the EU. The Department supported the development of a postgraduate training programme, specifically tailored to the necessary activities and skills required to exercise this new profession. In the autumn of 2022, the pilot training programme was completed with the first batch of 150 sustainable development experts, people working for central public authorities, mainly for the 22 Hubs, but also for Secretariat - General of the Government, National Institute of Statistics and the Romanian Court of Accounts.

In order to integrate these experts, as of 2022, the Romanian Administrative Code offers authorities and institutions of the central and local public administration, with responsibilities in the implementation of specific activities related to sustainable development, the possibility to include in their organisational chart the expert of sustainable development position.

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Mission Letter - Graduation ceremony of the course for sustainable development experts Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 22 November 2022

Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 22 November 2022

The training programme is over, but the learning never ends: this is a unique opportunity to assume the role of an agent of change, to promote a new SDS-oriented mindset in your institution, among colleagues, but also outside the institution.
Coalition Sustainable Romania

The Coalition is a private, non-political initiative established by the Sustainability Embassy in Romania, in 2020, for ongoing dialogue with representative segments of civil society and engagement in Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation and monitoring.

The Coalition includes more than 145 organizations, large companies, SMEs and NGOs, whose teams include more than 90,000 employees.

Under the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, the Government has committed to building policy coherence for sustainable development and in 2019 asked the OECD to assess the adequacy of the institutional strategic framework and to make recommendations for improvement. The assessment took into account the eight PCSD guiding principles for promoting good institutional practices for policy coherence, Principles 3, 5 and 7. It also attempted to estimate the extent to which the public administration is capable of sustaining and delivering on the policy coherence dimension of the policy coherence for sustainable development, in terms of cross-sectoral and spill-over effects.

The assessment resulted in two reports, finalised in 2020: OECD Scan of Institutional Mechanisms to Deliver on the SDGs and OECD Report on SDG Budgeting in Romania which identified strengths and bottlenecks related to PCSD, as well as risks of policy fragmentation, and advanced a set of 10 recommendations for systemic changes, including legislative amendments.

Institutional Planning and Budgeting Mechanisms

2022 was a turning point in terms of improving the predictability and efficiency of decision-making processes by strengthening the capacity for policy coordination and impact analysis at the level of Government and coordination mechanisms, in line with the tools of the new version of the CSRD Directive. Many companies do not currently have the skills and experience to remove the disconnect between business and sustainability and set sustainability as a core business principle. This is a major driver of change as the Directive will increase the quality and quantity of information that companies will report, using a European standard, and in digital format. The argument for sustainability remains, sustainability is non-negotiable.

Institutional Planning and Budgeting Mechanisms

Three key government decisions were adopted in 2022, creating the legal prerequisites for mainstreaming the SDG perspective into policy planning methodologies across the entire public administration, from budget design and execution, and into actions to strengthen the regulatory impact assessment system.

Box 9

Mainstreaming the SDGs into Policy Planning and Budgeting


- Government Decision No. 427/2022 Improves the short and medium-term public building planning system by aligning strategic planning with budgeting. The development of coherent budgets aligned with public policy objectives, in the long term, will ensure the transition to green budgeting and SDGs budgeting.

- Government Decision No. 443/2022 Enables taking stock of all the aspects related to the regulatory impact assessment on sustainable development objectives. The impact assessment is conducted in line with Romania’s obligations pursuant to the EU Regulatory Impact Assessment on sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. Reference to the use of the EC recommended checklist for regulatory impact assessment, the Better Regulation Toolbox.

The Romanian Government’s effort to strengthen its sustainable development processes and structures continues with the development of a PCSD roadmap in 2023, with technical assistance provided by the OECD. The institutional framework development, and the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the Department are prerequisites for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Romania. Three years after taking on the implementation of the OECD Recommendation of the Council of PCSD, the results have become visible and recognised both nationally and internationally.

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The universal, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs requires the integration of the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability development at all levels of society, by ensuring and strengthening the policy coherence for sustainable development.

Box 8

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

Guiding Principles

- Institutionalise political commitment
- Decision-making processes take into account long-term perspectives
- Inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial coordination
- Participatory processes
- Correlation between policies and policy integration
- Consultation and coordination between levels of government
- Monitoring and reporting on policy coherence
- Financial resources and instruments

The universal, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs requires the integration of the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability development at all levels of society, by ensuring and strengthening the policy coherence for sustainable development.

There is no doubt about the complexity and challenges posed by the new version of the CSRD Directive. Many companies do not currently have the skills and experience to remove the disconnect between business and sustainability and set sustainability as a core business principle. This is a major driver of change as the Directive will increase the quality and quantity of information that companies will report, using a European standard, and in digital format. The argument for sustainability remains, sustainability is non-negotiable.

In subsequent stages, members of the Coalition participated in training sessions for understanding and using non-financial evaluation and reporting criteria.

The Coalition members present at these consultation and training processes represented a wide range of activity sectors, including retail, banking, transport, construction, consultancy, packaging and waste management etc.

Institutionalised political commitment and decision-making processes take into account the long-term perspectives. Inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial coordination are participatory processes. Correlation between policies and policy integration is ensured and strengthened through consultation and coordination between levels of government. Monitoring and reporting on policy coherence, financial resources and instruments provide technical assistance to the OECD, the results have become visible and recognised both nationally and internationally.

The need to use statistical data is felt not only in the act of government, but also in ensuring the transparency of the act of government. Indicators are produced mainly by the National Institute of Statistics, with the help of ministries and agencies and, why not, in the future, also with the help of NGOs, which come to develop certain statistical indicators that do not or cannot produce with a certain frequency and at a certain level of detail, sufficient to understand the phenomenon we are analysing.”

Tudorel ANDREI, President
The National Institute of Statistics
Launch event of Sustainable Romania Aggregator data platform Bucharest, 7 November 2022
Romainian Court of Accounts

Romania is sending a clear signal on auditing the performance of public institutions in Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation by strengthening the role of the Romanian Court of Accounts. As a body entrusted to control the use of public financial resources, the Romanian Court of Accounts, initiated in 2021 the documentation process as part of a mission carried out with Department of Sustainable Development on “Auditing the implementation and achievement of Romania’s Sustainable Development Goals”. The goal of the mission was to understand the implementation and achievement of the objectives set out in Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and the extent to which the objectives assumed under National Recovery and Resilience Plan contribute to their achievement; the coherence of their mainstreaming into the implementation plans and projects of the Ministries and Public Institutions involved with a view to identifying opportunities to trigger a performance audit mission leading to improved achievement of the objectives assumed and to collect information in order to identify the most appropriate audit topics to enable Romanian Court of Accounts to contribute to the national efforts for the implementation of 2030 Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy.

In 2022, Romanian Court of Accounts initiated audit missions to three ministries

- Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests
- Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
- Ministry of Energy

From April 2022 to May 2023, Romanian Court of Accounts was engaged in a peer learning process with the Supreme Audit Institution in the Netherlands, on the 3 audit themes, mainly through workshops organised under a support programme coordinated by the Dutch Ministry of Finance, called the Constituency Programme.

Systemic Approaches and Transformative Actions

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration

In 2022, Department of Sustainable Development started designing the architecture of Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration, an innovative institution for research, education and dialogue on sustainable development, to align public policies and decisions in support of sustainable development goals. The Centre will have the headquarters in Bucharest and branches in all eight development regions of Romania, which will operate as regional hubs made up of research institutes, universities, local public authorities, SMEs, NGOs and civil society, supporting advanced and strategic thinking for sustainable development.

The Center, including its hubs, will facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation, policy development and knowledge exchange between higher education institutions and researchers in fields related to sustainable development, i.e., social, economic and environmental, and local and central public administration. The Center will take up, develop and implement sustainable development modelling capacities, supporting decision-makers in adopting innovative and policy opportunities and adapting to optimal development scenarios.

Research teams will design, research and propose measures and solutions for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and new ways of using digital tools to improve adaptation, transformation and learning processes, from central government to citizen.

Training Programme for Experts of Sustainable Development in Public Administration

The empowerment of public administration staff for the implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and the 2030 Agenda will continue under an extensive training programme in the field of sustainable development, to include about 400 more employees of central public institutions and 1,600 employees of local public administration from all counties of Romania. The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development will also support this initiative of the Department of Sustainable Development. The training programme will start at the end of 2022, and the target is that by 2026 Romania will have trained 2,000 public officials as “experts of sustainable development”.

The training of local public administration staff is an initiative that strengthens vertical coherence, transposing Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy into action tailored to the specificity of regions, counties and cities. Sub-national SDG-related efforts were also driven by the EU Regulations providing cohesion and development funds taking into account, among others, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

One-Stop-Shop Platform

To support coherent local implementation of the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and 2030 Agenda, Department of Sustainable Development initiated the construction of a virtual resource centre. This one-stop-shop public administration at regional and local levels to “localise” the SDGs and will facilitate realistic decision-making informed by sustainable development indicators trends and forecasts. The aim of the virtual resource centre is to implement the highest UX and UI Design standards to visually engage online visitors, to improve the process of transferring sustainable development best practices, providing a platform for easy dissemination of information to all stakeholders.

As an extension of the virtual one-stop-shop, is envisaged the connection with the Indicator-based assessment of local and regional progress toward the SDGs dashboard, developed by the Research Centre for Sustainable Development of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca. This Platform, using ArcGIS Dashboard technology, is primarily developed for institutions and local public administrations. It enables users to assess the sustainable development performance of each administrative-territorial unit in Romania e.g., municipality, town, city and county, by calculating the SDG index. An international standard methodology was applied to calculate the SDG index. The SDG index is a composite index, which sums up specific indices calculated for each of the 17 SDGs. Platform users may view and compare the SDG index for all administrative-territorial units in Romania.

Promoting Sustainable Development and Public Awareness

Promoting the 2030 Agenda, the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy and public awareness are important to ensure sustainable development in Romania. One of the priorities of the National Action Plan is promoting sustainable development principles and values, through actions that promotes sustainable development concepts with the aim of achieving the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy targets and communication actions to support strategy implementation. Numerous initiatives adopted by Romania have contributed to raising awareness among the general public and stakeholders interested in Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation. In recent years, the active involvement of public authorities, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organisations in sustainable development promotion and awareness-raising actions has shown an increasing trend. Information events and public debates were organised, communication campaigns were launched, including with media involvement, and educational actions were organised by including sustainable development issues in school curricula.

The Sustainable Development Gala, a programme aimed at raising awareness and providing information on the 17 SDGs, has been organised since 2020, to highlight and award impactful projects. In 2022, the National Action Plan was launched, events with international participation were organised to promote Romania’s model of SDGs governance, as well as regional public debates to promote the National Action Plan and the implementation support tools.

Roma尼亚 in the International Structures and Processes for the 2030 Agenda Implementation

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Since the establishment of High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, Romania has participated in the works of this Forum, UN’s central platform for monitoring the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. Since Romania’s first WKR, presented in 2016, Romania has organised every year HLPF side events in collaboration with other governments, international organisations and the private sector.

Since 2017, Department of Sustainable Development has been funding promotion projects proposed by national and international NGOs, foundations and associations. At least 20 projects are implemented in partnership with Department of Sustainable Development every year. In 2021-2022, an online publicity and communication campaign was initiated, using Facebook ads, web banners, setting keywords on Google SDG campaign, a database of more than 3,000 stakeholders were developed and newsletters are sent through them monthly, video spots were produced and broadcast and promoted on TV channels, the Department of Sustainable Development website was improved.

The Center for Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration and RTV Stop Shop Platform initiatives were official contribution to the HLPF. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the European Region was established by the Geneva-based United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its 67th session, in April 2017.

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Each of the five UN Regional Commissions convenes annual regional forums to share experience and discuss concrete solutions on how to achieve the SDGs. The 19th edition of each regional forum reflects the region’s official contribution to the HLPF. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the European Region was established by the Geneva-based United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its 67th session, in April 2017.

Voluntary National Review 2023 Romania
Romania was involved in the works of this forum every year, with speeches delivered by government officials at high-level sessions, participation in high-level round tables, organisation and moderation of side events, in 2021: “Aligning the European Recovery and Resilience Plans with the 2010 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of policy coherence and public service leaders”, an event organised in cooperation with the OECD and in collaboration with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Romania is also a member of 2 OECD-related structures, namely the Nuclear Energy Agency since 2017 and the International Transport Forum since 2019.

As for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as mentioned in the presentation of PCSD institutional mechanisms, the OECD Public Governance Directorate has been supporting Romania since 2019 in creating a framework to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development and is working closely with the Department of Sustainable Development to support internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda by organising joint events for exchange of experience and best practices. Starting with 2018, Romania is invited to participate in the annual OECD meetings of the PCSD focal groups in which members of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Council.

Regional Cooperation Council

It is the operational structure of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the only forum in South-East Europe launched and managed by the states of the region. Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Slovenia and Kosovo are participants in the South-East European Cooperation Process. The Council plays an active role in the implementation of regional programmes within the overall political guidelines set by the South-East European Cooperation Process, supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic integration process in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization candidate and aspirant countries.

Romania, a founding member of the South-East European Cooperation Process, has consistent participation in the Regional Cooperation Committee of the former Yugoslavia and is, since 2019, achieving a notable result, more specifically the adoption of the Strategy by bringing together business incubators, governmental organisations to explore business opportunities, empower public servants.

Cooperation with the OECD and the Initiation of the Accession Process

Joining the OECD is one of the most important country objectives for Romania after joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the EU. The OECD helps member countries maximise trade and investment, encourage innovation, increase business opportunities, empower private actors, support entrepreneurship and improve the quality of public services.

On 25 January 2022, the Council decided to take the first step in accession discussions with six candidate countries to OECD membership, including Romania. At the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in June 2022, the Roadmap for Romania was adopted, which sets out the terms, conditions and milestones for Romania’s accession process and aims to align domestic legislation, policies and practices with those of the OECD. The main areas identified in the Roadmap to be covered in the Committees’ technical reviews are structural reform, trade and investment, sustainable and inclusive development, governance, environment, biodiversity, and climate, digitisation, infrastructure.

The Romanian Government successfully completed the first stage of the OECD accession process in December 2022, when it submitted the Initial Memorandum, according to the Roadmap Romania will be assessed in 26 areas and will have to internalise over 320 legal instruments in legislation, policies and practices.

In relation to the OECD, Romania contributes to regional programmes and projects such as “Eurasia Competitiveness Programme”, “South East Europe Regional Programme”, “Strengthening co-ordination and strategic planning mechanisms in South-East Europe”, “Eurasia Competitiveness Programme” and “East Europe 2030 Strategy - A Regional Attempt in Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in South-East Europe and Coordination with Juniors and Official Development Assistance in SDGs in the context of South-East Europe 2030 Strategy.”

Sustainable Development Solutions Network - Black Sea

Sustainable Development Solutions Network has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. It mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development. Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea is one of regional networks. Romania is a Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea member and has representatives on the Governing Board.

Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea mobilizes its members to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through active collaboration between researchers, teachers and students, organizing workshops and events, connecting young people across the region through Sustainable Development Solutions Network Youth Black Sea, engaging in actions aimed at integrating local communities in efforts to implement the SDGs, identifying gaps in SDGs monitoring the implementation in the region, participating in the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network - Sustainable Euro-Asia Seas Initiative.

European Sustainable Development Network

It is an organisation for representatives of public administration and other key experts in the field of sustainable development in Europe. European Sustainable Development Network, as a learning and exchange platform, mainly deals with issues related to the preparation and implementation of national strategies and processes serving the implementation of the international commitments related to sustainable development. The Association also fosters the pan-European dialogue and advises political decision-makers at European, national and sub-national levels. Romania has been a member of European Sustainable Development Network since January 2020 and has held a Vice-Chair position since December 2021.

Romania has participated in the second year and organised workshops and peer-learning events on challenges and best practices in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In October 2022, Romania hosted in Bucharest the European Sustainable Development Network Annual International Conference with the topic “Europe’s position as a leading agent of change against the triple planetary crisis - climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”. The largest annual event brought together around 100 experts, civil servants and EU dignitaries in the field of sustainable development.

European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network

It is a European network of independent advisory councils providing advice and recommendations on environmental policy and sustainable development at national and European levels. Its mission is to promote sustainable development and environmental protection through independent advisory councils in Europe. This Council Network facilitates the exchange of best practice and experience between its members, supports the development of policies and programmes that promote sustainable development. More than 30 independent advisory councils from 22 European countries are members of the Advisory Councils Network. Members networks organisations with an advisory role in decision-making processes on sustainable development and environmental protection.

In May 2021, the Romanian Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, a member of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network as a full member. In 2022, Romania, through the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development and the Department of Sustainable Development, was represented at the Annual Conference and anniversary edition, held in Helsinki, Finland. The theme was “The Critical Decade of Action: Mobilising Sustainability Transformation in Europe.” During the conference, Romania announced the organisation of the 3rd International Conference of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network in Bucharest, in 2023.

Organisation of La Francophonie / Institut de la Francophonie pour le Développement Durable

Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable is an international organisation that aims to promote sustainable development in the French-speaking space. The Institute supports the member states of the International Organisation of La Francophonie to promote and implement the 2030 Agenda and to this end organises annual meetings of national focal points. Starting from 2020, Romania has been participating in the annual meetings organized by this council, with the goal to exchange experience on the implementation and monitoring of progress made towards the 2030 Agenda goals and to present best practice examples from Romania.
Institutional Governance Framework for Sustainable Development and Functionalities
Adapted from Report: OECD Scan of Institutional Mechanisms to Deliver on the SDGs
THE OVERAL PERFORMANCE in relation to the NATIONAL INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

62.1%

SDGs Progress, %

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Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania
A network analysis of the targets by ministries

SDGs interlinkages

Tagets of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy

SDG 1
SDG 2
SDG 3
SDG 4
SDG 5
SDG 6
SDG 7
SDG 8
SDG 9
SDG 10
SDG 11
SDG 12
SDG 13
SDG 14
SDG 15
SDG 16
SDG 17

Ministry
Labour and Social Solidarity
Justice
Internal Affairs
Agriculture and Rural Development
Development, Public Works and Administration
Research, Innovation and Digitalization
Sports
Health
Education
Culture
Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities
National Defence
Environment, Water
Forests
Investments and European Projects
Transport and Infrastructure
Energy
Finance
Entrepreneurship and Tourism
Economy
Foreign Affairs
End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Romania’s goal
Reduce the number of citizens living in severe and relative poverty in all its forms, reduce the number of persons living below the poverty line, encourage participation in the labour market of persons who are able to work, develop the protection and social assistance system.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic
During the state of emergency and, subsequently, the state of alert, the employers who were forced to suspend the activity, temporarily, in whole or in part, because of the Covid-19 pandemic granted the employees a technical unemployment benefit. This benefit was also provided to the employees whose activities were suspended as a result of the epidemiologic investigation conducted by the public health directorates.

The unemployment benefit for unemployed with work experience was granted based on the average net salary related to the hours actually worked following the reduction of working time.

The unemployment benefit for unemployed with work experience recorded an increase by 20.5%, from about €40 in 2016 to €226.10 in 2021. The number of unemployed persons decreased by 13.7%, from 5.01 million in 2016 to 4.02 million in 2021. Of the poor people, 2.9 million persons were in severe material deprivation in 2020, decreasing by 37.3% compared to 2016. AROPE decreased from 46.0% in 2016 to 34.4% in 2021, and the in-work poverty rate related to the same period decreased from 18.9% to 15.6%.

The unemployment benefit for unemployed with work experience was granted based on the average net salary related to the hours actually worked following the reduction of working time.

Policies and measures
The unemployment benefit was granted based on Unemployment Insurance and Employment Stimulation Law, and the amount was established according to the contribution period and the social reference indicator. The social reference indicator value is updated ex officio, every year, by the annual average rate of inflation from the previous year; the last value is kept if the annual average rate of inflation is negative. It has been regulated that 100% of the social reference indicator must be considered for the unemployment benefit intended for persons with a period of contribution of at least 1 year compared to only 75% of it, as it was prior to the enactment of law.

As a measure to urgently boost mobility, since 2017, the persons registered as unemployed with the employment agencies have been granted installation premiums to encourage the change of domicile or registered as unemployed with the employment agencies have been granted installation premiums. Since 2022, the Every Child in Kindergarten Programme, initially launched in 2016, has been extended since 2016 in the entire country. The programme was funded by the Romanian Government and implemented by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the local authorities.

The programme is an important initiative nationally implemented to increase children’s participation in early education and reduce the educational gaps between children from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds. Thus, the programme supports the disadvantaged families who do not afford to send their children to kindergarten, giving them the chance to integrate in a structured educational environment and to benefit from a quality education.

Challenges
- Reduce the number of families at risk of losing the ability to meet their daily living needs due to illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol addiction etc.
- Establish a cost standard for the social services addressed to vulnerable groups
- Reduce the number of persons affected by severe material deprivation
- Accelerate the pace of reduction in the persistent poverty rate, which improved in 2020 by only 1.2% compared to 2016. Romania must continue the support measures and programmes for the employment, education and training of persons from vulnerable groups and for integrated social services
- The gap between the relative poverty rate at the 40% threshold of median equalised disposable income per adult at national level placed Romania 5% above the EU average in 2020, and 6.7% above the EU average in 2021 at the gap between the in-work poverty rate and the non-in-work poverty rate.

Next steps
Romania must continue the support measures and programmes for the employment, education and training of the persons in vulnerable groups, for the reduction of poverty and the settlement of the employment issues, and for the integrated social services, by implementing the national strategies on employment, social inclusion of homeless people, rights of disabled persons and long-term care and active ageing for the period.

Till 2027, the Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme shall support the marginalised rural communities, elders, children, single parent families with dependent children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as homeless people, victims of domestic violence, people released from prison, migrants and people addicted to alcohol and drugs, the last category increasing in Romania.

Local community contribution
The Day Care Centre for Children is the initiative of the local authorities in Zalău, Sălaj county, which changed the destination of an out of use thermal point in 2020. The centre provides cultural-recreational services for 76 children/day, after school and during vacations, especially for children in the marginalised urban community. The centre has three classrooms on the ground floor, one of them being intended as a foreign language laboratory, a dining room, a multi-purpose room and toilets, and two offices upstairs.

Civil society contribution
Since 2022, the “Cradle of Stars” Settlement project of Turu Monastery provides a home for 18 orphans from foster homes of the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Prahova County where they feel loved and protected. For a better future, children are helped to integrate socially, including by enrolling in school. Through the dental office of the settlement, these children have already benefited from free examinations and treatments, and now they shall have the opportunity to live in a family environment and receive the care and attention they need. Turu Monastery proves that active involvement in the community can make a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable members of the society.

Day care Centre for Children - before and after, Zalău, Sălaj county
Source: Graiul Sălajului

Source: Ziarul Lumina

Voluntary National Review 2023
ROMANIA

Every Child in Kindergarten Programme

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Challenges

Next steps

Local community contribution

Civil society contribution

Day care Centre for Children - before and after, Zalău, Sălaj county
Source: Graiul Sălajului

Source: Ziarul Lumina
Voluntary National Review 2023
ROMANIA

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the vital role that agriculture and food industry have for the proper functioning of the society. Although, in times of economic growth, efforts behind securing food are less visible, the response to the pandemic crisis has made easier: the direct contact of local producers with the end consumer, the development of integrated distribution networks, the transition of restaurants’ activity to home deliveries, keeping agri-food markets open while respecting social distancing rules.

Through measures, Romania contributed through a competitive agricultural sector offering the citizens the possibility to source from domestic production, helping maintain the competitiveness of local producers and value chains, leading to maintaining the current activity and repurposing the renumeration of farmers by making the farmer-consumer chain shorter.

Leave no one behind

To support the disadvantaged people exposed to hunger and poverty, the Romanian Food Banks recover the excess food and facilitate the donation, avoiding the food waste. The excess food may be provided through sponsorship and donation or in accordance with the law against food waste.

The activity started in 2017 with a single food bank only at the level of the municipality of Bucharest, which managed 57 tons of food. Later, a network was developed with coverage at the level of all the development regions of Romania. The amount of food recovered and donated by the Romanian Food Banks in the period 2017-2022 was 14,157 tons, worth approx. 423,166 million. In actions to support disadvantaged groups, the Food Banks collaborated with 572 partner NGOs and benefited 270,115 people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added considerable pressure to the Food Banks network, which has had more requests from both parties and affected categories of needy people. The effort made to respond to requests doubled in 2020 and tripled in 2021 the amount of food collected and distributed, compared to 2017, reaching 10,387 t and, respectively 387 t.

In 2022, with the support of the Romanian Parliament, the Romanian Food Banks Federation hosted the FEBA, Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion, an annual event organized at the initiative of the European Food Banks Federation. The FEBA 2022 theme was Strengthening Food Systems by Supporting the Resilience and Capacity of Food Banks.

Challenges

- Increase the agricultural yield and the share of organic agricultural production in total agricultural production
- Increase the export of processed agricultural products, to the detriment of the export of raw materials and basic products
- Reduce the shortage of specialists in the field of active interventions in agriculture, climate changes and nutrition
- Reduce the food losses and waste
- Decrease the number of underweight and overweight children
- Increase the number of products certified at national level and European level
- Increase the financial incentives for conversion and reduce confusion with other quality schemes and low awareness of consumers as regards the benefits of organic production for health, climate and environment

Next steps

Romania consolidates its strategic advantage in agriculture by implementing the National Strategic Plan by 2027, whereby it aims at intelligent, resilient and diversified agricultural sector ensuring the food security, increasing viability of farms by stabilising the farmers’ income and eliminating the disparities between farms, practising environmentally friendly agriculture on small farms, agri-environment and climate on arable land, maintaining organic certification and training new generations of farmers.

To stimulate the conversion from conventional agriculture to ecological agriculture, the National Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production until 2027 provides the stimulation of processing products obtained in the local organic agriculture system, complying with the strict production rules and principles and aims at obtaining organic products in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way.

The National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation for 2023 supports research and implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, including for the soil protection, identification and adoption of sustainable agricultural methods to manage natural resources and biodiversity. These practices shall result in substantial increase of agricultural production, environmental protection and promotion of responsible use of natural resources, thus contributing to a sustainable agricultural system and reaching the sustainable development objectives.

Good practice

A store network implemented, through a close collaboration with 150 local producers, holding international certification Global GAP for food quality and safety, the Lidl network processes in order to develop environmentally friendly alternatives to the use of plant protection products and chemical fertilisers.

Depending on the season, 150 producers provide the Lidl Market with a significant percentage of season fruit and vegetables from Romanian farmers, ensuring the traceability for local products guaranteeing transparency at the level of the origin of products in the stores and highlight Romanian producers.

Business sector contribution

Association and cooperation relations are diversifying depending on the variety of connections between agriculture and other sectors of national economy. These relations are also important in agriculture, between economic operators and units responsible for storage, processing and marketing agricultural products. They facilitate the cooperation between the actors involved in rural development, promoting the creation of cooperatives, groups of producers, networks and clusters, as well as cooperation among these. These efforts are made with the aim of jointly implementing a business plan in the agricultural and food industry with a focus on short supply chains and the local market.

To reduce the food waste, the business environment is voluntarily involved in the food donation mechanism, thus having facilitated the contact with receiving operators whose identification and contact details are made public on Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development website.

Through the cooperatives, groups of producers and other forms of association, the efficiency of agricultural production may be improved, costs may be reduced and sustainable production may be encouraged. It may lead to the increase in the food availability and nutritional diversity, contributing to eliminating hunger and malnutrition in communities.

By facilitating the cooperation between the actors involved in rural development and promotion of short supply chains and local markets, these relations contribute to ensuring access to safe, nutritional and enough food for all.
Health services are accessible and/or free of charge to all children, being ensured by law, without payment or any connection with the parents’ contribution. The groups exempted from payment include children under 18, young people up to the age of 26 enrolled in education, patients who are subject to national health programmes, pregnant women without any income and pensioners. Emergency care is free of charge and more than 60 % of the population is exempted from the payment of fees required for the use of hospital services, due to the contributions paid to the sole health insurance national fund.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic
3,372,085 confirmed cases were reported during the COVID-19 pandemic on 31 December 2022. Of these, 97.7%, 3,237,471 respectively, were cured cases, according to European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

The National Committee for Special Emergency Situations managed the pandemic combating measures. In order to prevent the spread of the virus, states of emergency and alert were decreed, establishing limitations on the activities of public hospitals for the admission and treatment of urgent cases, changes in the structure of hospitals for the admission of COVID-19 cases, procurement of materials and medicines needed in the pandemic, remote medical consultations in primary care and specialist outpatient clinics. Measures were established to: increase the response capacity in residential centres for disabled persons, elders and other vulnerable categories; ensure the resilience of communities by wearing the protection mask, quarantine, isolation, etc.; reduce the impact of the type of risk by establishing the categories of allowed/prohibited activities, fulfilling the Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination. The European framework was implemented to issue, check and accept the COVID-19 vaccine has been included in the National Strategy of COVID-19 pandemic.

Next steps
To improve the access to medical care services, it is planned to equip at least 38 public health units, including through the construction of new buildings, providing ambulatory health care, the development of 200 integrated community centres and the construction of three operational regional emergency hospitals, increase by more than 50% of human resources in public health, diversify their skills, including for the creation of multidisciplinary teams for integrated case management shall improve diagnostic capacity. Extensive public education and awareness campaigns are planned for all ages and at all social levels, on regular health screening, so that the activity of family physicians is directed towards prevention and active health monitoring. Vaccine coverage is aimed for more than 90% of all vaccines included in the national immunisation programme and 70% for the vaccination of groups exposed to the risk of diseases preventable through vaccination.

Challenges
- Uneven distribution of family medicine practices, especially in the rural area, where the average number of insured included in the family physicians’ lists is higher than in the urban area
- Insufficient human resources and infrastructure for community medical care, palliative and rehabilitation-recovery care
- Improve, professionalise, and diversify care facilities in institutional and non-institutional day and long-term care centres, including at home, for the elderly and disabled population
- Extend the population screening to increase the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment capacity
- Increase the proper response capacity to multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and major mental health problems, including forms of long-Covid and, in particular, the neuro-psychological forms generated by it, taking into account the risk of later developing neuro-degenerative disorders, strokes, etc.

Civil society contribution
Give Life has set up the most famous social involvement initiative in Romania: #NoiFareamUnSpital. Thus, more than 350,000 persons and more than 7,000 companies supported with trust and their own funds the construction from scratch of the First Children’s Hospital, providing multidisciplinary care to children with cancer and other serious diseases. What started as a project meant to renovate the paediatric oncology department of the Marie S. Curie Children’s Emergency Hospital in Bucharest turned into the first building of 12,000 m² and 6 floors and continues the plans to create a true medical campus. The construction works are completed. The hospital shall be donated to Marie S. Curie Hospital and shall operate as a public hospital. Give Life currently works with the Romanian authorities to implement a pilot project for the management of the Department of Paediatric Radiotherapy within the Hospital, based on the corporate governance and medical governance principles.

Good practice
HIV Outcomes Romania, multi-stakeholder initiative including the HIV patient associations and pleading for the quality of life of HIV persons, co-organised public policy consultations and roundtables with community and non/governmental experts. Thus, the new National Strategy of HIV/AIDS is focused on the needs of HIV persons and provides for 2030: ZERO new infections, reach the new targets, UNAIDS 95-95-95 for testing-treatment- viral suppression in the risk communities, reduce the health stigma, increase the NGOs involvement, prevention programmes in the immigration receiving centres.
From 2017 to 2020, the National Programme for Rural Education contributed to the modernization of school infrastructure, improvement of the learning process quality and ensuring access to education for all children in rural areas.

Ensuring access to vocational and technical education, improving the quality of the education process and promoting the integration of young people on the labour market were coordinated from 2018 to 2022 through the National Strategy for the Development of Professional Training in the Dual System.

The improvement of higher education quality through the modernization of curriculum, increase in the research and development capacity of universities and ensuring proper funding were developed through the National Strategy of Tertiary Education.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Distance learning and the temporary closure of many schools and vocational training facilities have limited the physical presence of the children and youth at the courses during the pandemic. The most affected were vulnerable children from rural areas, compared to those from urban areas, because of the limited access to digital equipment, which did not allow them to constantly participate in online courses, but also due to the fact that schools and teaching staff have not been sufficiently prepared for the distance learning.

Educational support consisted of electronic social vouchers, the national programme Home School which provided digital devices to pupils in disadvantaged areas, the national programme of remedial activities for pupils, etc. For the after-school activities and remedial classes for 168,000 disadvantaged pupils, including from the rural areas and from the Romanian communities, €50 million were allocated through the REACT-EU Programme.

Following the measures, in 2021, 91.3% of IT equipment from national education were connected to the internet.

From 2017 to 2020, the National Project for the Development of Rural Education contributed to the modernization of school infrastructure, improvement of the learning process quality and ensuring access to education for all children in rural areas.

Early school leaving by young people aged between 18 and 24 years, especially among women

The improvement of higher education quality through the modernization of curriculum, increase in the research and development capacity of universities and ensuring proper funding were developed through the National Strategy of Tertiary Education.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Distance learning and the temporary closure of many schools and vocational training facilities have limited the physical presence of the children and youth at the courses during the pandemic. The most affected were vulnerable children from rural areas, compared to those from urban areas, because of the limited access to digital equipment, which did not allow them to constantly participate in online courses, but also due to the fact that schools and teaching staff have not been sufficiently prepared for the distance learning.

Educational support consisted of electronic social vouchers, the national programme Home School which provided digital devices to pupils in disadvantaged areas, the national programme of remedial activities for pupils, etc. For the after-school activities and remedial classes for 168,000 disadvantaged pupils, including from the rural areas and from the Romanian communities, €50 million were allocated through the REACT-EU Programme.

Following the measures, in 2021, 91.3% of IT equipment from national education were connected to the internet.

Leave no one behind

The Romanian education system ensures fair and proportional participation and education, regardless of ethnicity, in a learning environment which is inclusive for all. The share of Roma ethnicity in the school population in primarily and secondary education was 5.6% in 2021.

For social, economic and educational integration of Roma community, the Strategy on Stimulating Participation of Roma Children and Youth in Education Programmes was implemented, being extended on all SDGs, and the professional development of the employees shall be stimulated by increasing the number of participants in the specialisation classes, including the high early school leaving rate among this ethnicity.

Challenges

- Improve the level of knowledge of youth in terms of reading, science and mathematics and their subsequent employment, the increase in the employment rate of young aged 20-34 years respectively, 1.3 years after graduation
- Reduce the rate of early school leaving by youth aged between 18 and 24 years, especially among women
- Increase the rate of participation in early education of children aged between 3 years and the official age for enrolment in compulsory education
- Improve the quality of professional skills of adults and reduce the significant difference in the quality of education provided in urban and rural areas, and between social and economic groups

Next steps

Romania shall continue to make efforts to improve the quality of education though the policy reforms for safer, sustainable and inclusive schools, through the modernization of school infrastructure, rehabilitation and supplementation and construction of new schools, in the first stage in areas with the highest seismic risk in Romania, to ensure learning environments which are safer and improved for pupils and teachers in the selected schools and to increase the institutional capacity to invest in the sustainable educational infrastructure.

The National Programme to Reduce the Early School Leaving rate will support through the NRRP the establishment, endowment and operationalisation of additional services for the disadvantaged groups shall be implemented in response to the risk of early school leaving.

Reforms and investments are also provided to facilitate digital education, namely the development of the evaluation and content development platform, endowment of schools with digital equipment and technological resources for IT laboratories, digitalisation of universities and their training for digital future professions, establishment of regional consortia and development and endowment of integrated professional campuses.

In order to facilitate digital education, the educational digital content shall be prepared, including the manuals and open educational resources, digital pedagogies shall be adopted to improve the digital skills of teachers who shall benefit from training regarding the incorporation of digital instruments in the teaching and learning process.

To acquire the relevant skills, including technical and professional skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, the National Educational Programme for Environment and Climate shall be implemented, being extended on all SDGs, and the professional development of the employees shall be stimulated by increasing the number of participants in the specialisation classes, including the expert of sustainable development.

Companies contribution

Through the Exercise Company teaching method, pupils develop entrepreneurial skills by simulating the internal processes occurring in a real company and collaborating with other companies and institutions. The specialisation curriculum for the skills belonging to the economic specialisation contains modules assigned for the economic specialisation. Thus, pupils had the occasion to get in touch with the economic culture of the partners in the country and abroad.

During the academic year 2019-2020, 1,555 exercise companies/simulated companies were authorised, of which 462 new companies, 550 continued companies and 543 takeover companies, which put the current activity provided in the curriculum and extracurricular activities through the Exercise Company teaching method.

On the ROCT platform dedicated to vocational and technical education, extracurricular activities of 1,405 exercise companies/simulated companies, of which 689 new companies, 355 continued companies and 411 takeover companies, were registered for the current activity provided in the curriculum.

Local community contribution

The first vocational school in Romania, with a 10-year tradition, is the result of the partnership between Ibrăşov Municipality, Ibrăşov County School Inspectorate and the Non-governmental Association Fit for Future. This is a developing school, operating in dual system, currently having 782 pupils, 57 teachers, 19 partner-economic operators. The school’s activity is based on a strong connection with the economic environment of Ibrăşov county.
Overview

In January 2022, Romania’s population was 19,042,415 inhabitants, of which 51.4% were women. The gender pay gap decreased by 2.4% in 2020 compared to 2016, from 4.8% to 2.4%.

The domestic violence against women, represented by the number of adult female victims of domestic violence recorded by the administrative services, increased by 102% cases, respectively by 59.5% in 2019 compared to 2016. The slight reduction of data in 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, may underestimate the domestic violence phenomena, by stopping victims from seeking social protection services.

On ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities in leadership positions at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, Romania made progress as regards the share of women in leadership positions. In 2021, in the central public administration, there were 7% leadership positions, at the decision-making level 1 and 2, with an occupation rate of 84.5%, 603 positions respectively. Of all positions, 325, 53.9% respectively, were occupied by women.

Gender equality, in terms of the participation in the political decision-making process at national level, reveals that, following the parliamentary elections carried out in 2020, 85 women obtained a mandate in the Romanian Parliament, of 466 parliamentarians, representing 18.2%.

Response to war in Ukraine

Following the war in Ukraine, in 2022, a large number of refugees, mostly women and children, transited Romania and faced the imminent risk of marginalisation. Language was one of the main obstacles related to their access to services and jobs, making it more difficult to provide immediate humanitarian aid.

In 2022, Romania implemented the National Measure Plan related to the protection and inclusion of displaced persons/refugees from Ukraine, who benefit from temporary protection in Romania. The refugees had access to official information about the rights, obligations and facilities made available by the Romanian Government.

The immediate response models were also provided by the civil society in Romania, by developing integrated services in Ukrainian and Russian, used by refugee women and children, and services for the victims of domestic, gender or sexual violence in the conflict areas.

In 2022, 78 women and girls were victims of violence or aggressors from Ukraine were identified.

Leave no one behind

In 2021, the tripartite protocol was signed between ANES, ADRI and ROWL to develop and implement actual and coherent actions and measures which are necessary to reduce the gender violence phenomenon and improve the quality of life of Romanian citizens who are in Italy. Protocol addresses the issues of women belonging to vulnerable groups, who are at risk in Italy, in terms of domestic violence, discrimination, sexual exploitation, work exploitation and human trafficking.

Actions are meant to limit and prevent the impact of migration, for work purposes, on transnational children and families. The protocol was activated during the COVID-19 period to facilitate the access of women who are victims of domestic violence, to services and information which are available in Romania and Italy during lockdown.

This Protocol supported the promotion of the Regulation 2166 Impact of Labour migration on “left-behind” children of EU parliamentary Assembly, in 2021, regarding the impact of economic migration on “left-behind” children in national level in Romania.

Challenges

- Lack of comprehensive data related to the extent and nature of physical, psychic and sexual violence against women is especially due to the fact that the aggressions are not reported due to fear, by shame and fear of stigmatisation. Therefore, the measures to combat the phenomenon are not supported by solid proof, due to the lack of data.
- Encouraging the culture of gender equality both in the family life and in all educational, economic, and societal activities, including at the level of companies, public services, and political life.
- Increase the proportion of women among politicians through a better awareness of voters, but also of the parties appointing candidates. Change the mindset on the promotion of women in leadership positions by involving gender experts in the institutions.

Next steps

The encouragement and support provided to victims of domestic violence and prevention of violence will be made through extensive awareness campaigns to avoid prejudices related to the division of activities, tasks and work in the family between “female” and “male”, as well as displaying and instilling any other types of unequal behaviour.

To promote women in decision-making and national representation positions, it is necessary to enact a law providing measures to ensure balanced representation on the electoral lists for the election of senators and deputies, proportional to the gender distribution of the population at national and constituency level, related to the year before elections, except for those containing one candidate. In order to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes to be placed on eligible places on the lists of candidates, they should be ordered on the lists according to the principle of no more than two candidates of the same sex consecutively.

Local community contribution

Electronic Monitoring Information System SIME, operationalised in Bucharest, Iași, Mureș and Vrancea. The enforcement of 2021 Law on electronic monitoring in judicial and criminal enforcement proceedings, allowed for the SIME implementation in Romania, by means of devices of electronic surveillance for persons for whom legal measures are ordered. Since 1 October 2022, SIME operates in the pilot phase in the capital and 3 counties. The system shall be extended in all counties of the country by 2025.

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The use of electronic systems allows for an increase in the degree to which measures to protect the rights of protected persons are ensured, but it is not a constraint measure, but a monitoring or surveillance method. SIME allows for monitoring compliance with measures ordered in judicial proceedings. The use of these systems is not equivalent to the protection of the physical integrity of the protected persons, but allows measures to be taken to prevent and counteract possible physical contact between the victim of domestic violence and the aggressor. SIME shall ensure the compliance with the rules imposed by the enforcement of house arrest and remote surveillance.

Monitoring is performed without human intervention, systematically and exclusively in Romania and ensures the confidentiality of the identity of the supervised person who is wearing the electronic device and the protected person or persons.

Civil society contribution

GLORIA Project - Integrated Support Granted to Victims of Domestic and Gender Violence. Having started in March 2021, the project provides integrated quality services, addressing domestic and gender-based violence in a multidisciplinary way, encompassing specific social, medical, educational, occupational and housing assistance measures for 550 persons, adults and children, who are victims of violence in rural and small urban areas in Iași, Vâlcea, Bacău and Neamț counties, covering 250 local communities where this type of services are missing or are not enough.

The project partners are the Centre for Mediation and Community Security Foundation, Corona Foundation and Heddah Association, an association which has experience in better practices in domestic violence in Norway. Being attracted in the project, ANES contributes to monitoring and informing all county and local institutions to implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

The project outcomes aim at supporting the victims of domestic and gender violence through the reception and emotional support statistic at forensic units, counselling to prevent and combat domestic violence - legal assistance and representation in court, psychological counselling, material assistance and support in crises, educational programmes - employment, training and information of population.

Good practice

The partnership between SGG, IINS and ROWL was signed in 2022 to periodically collect data and metadata of INDD 2030 set, as part of the SNDDIR 2030 monitoring mechanism. A new indicator, ZB0054 - Horizon 1 - Social: Proportion of seats held by women and men in national parliaments was built and introduced in the national statistics system. This indicator monitors the progress in fulfilling SDG 5 and is incorporated in the European Commission Priorities An economy operating for people and a new impulse for European democracy. The indicator may be deemed similar to the global indicator S.S.1. Proportion of seats held by women and men in national parliaments and local administrations.
Romania’s goal

Increase the quality of life by developing the water, sewerage infrastructure and public service, bringing Romania into line with the EU requirements and standards, in term of drinking water, wastewater, waste and increase the efficiency of the use of water in all sectors.

Overview

From 2016 to 2021, the water resources in Romania recorded an annual average volume of 124.3 billion m³, of which the share of underground water represented 9.25% and surface water 90.75%. At national level, 97.65% for 3,025 bodies of surface water and 91.61% of 143 underground bodies of water are in a good chemical status.

Water management is provided in the Law of Water and Law on Water Supply and Sewerage, regulating the public water supply and sewerage service organised at the level of communes, towns, cities, counties or intercommunity development associations.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

During the entire state of alert, May 2020 - March 2022 and for a subsequent period of 90 days, as a response to the pressure of restrictive measures taken during the pandemic, the viability of the approval for water-related works was extended by the Law on certain measures to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic approved in 2020, to facilitate further economic activities.

Leave no one behind

The Government created the legal framework for unrestricted access of the population vulnerable to poverty to quality water supply and sewerage/treatment services, through NRRP Component C1 - Water Management, Investment 3 - Supporting the connection of low income persons with no bathroom/shower or flush toilet inside the house, to reach the 7.5% target in 2020, increasing to 7.75% compared to 5.45%, as it was from 2016 to 2021.

Challenge

- Protect water resources is still a major priority, considering the need to extend household networks to access water, sewerage and sanitation, especially in the rural area.
- Improve of water quality needs to decrease the untreated water percentage of the entire generated wastewater.
- Accelerate the annual average, to increase rate to 4.4% compared to 3.30%, as it was from 2016 to 2021,
- Accelerate of annual average rate of the population in the rural area connected to the public water supply system, to reach the 90% target in 2030, by increased to 7.75% compared to 5.45%, as it was from 2016 to 2021.
- Decrease the share of persons with no bathroom/shower or flush toilet inside the house, to reach the 15% target in 2030, accelerating the annual average increase rate to -23.3% compared to -8.3%, as it was from 2016 to 2021.

Next steps

For the protection of water resources, the water supply of towns in the centralised system, construction/extension of sewerage and water treatment systems, with priority for the modernisation of rural communities, national non-reimbursable investment programmes are launched. “Anghel Salăju” Programme, with funds of €4.5 billion for the period 2021-2028 is coordinated by Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration. The 2021-2027 Sustainable Development Programme, in agreement with the EU goal for the preservation, protection and improvement of the environmental quality, Priority 1 Development of water and wastewater infrastructure and the transition to a circular economy allocates the amount of €1.4 billion, through ERDF, CF and national contribution.

Good practice

From 2019 to 2022, the initiative “Clean Waters” of MailMultiVerde Association reunited town halls, community organisers and local associations, the National Administration “Romanian Waters” and volunteers for actions to clean the banks and water clarity, shoreline recreation and environmental education.

4400 volunteers took part in 82 greening actions on the Danube banks and tributaries, where 334 tons of plastic were collected; equipping 9 sections of the banks of the Danube with separate collection systems, from which 230 tons of plastic were collected, and installing 5 floating barriers on the Cerna, Jiu, Olt, Buzău and Siret rivers, with the help of which 246 tons of plastic were collected. Other 65 community events organised in the riverside localities gathered about 6,000 persons, both inhabitants and tourists, when 15 water filtering system springs were installed in Zimnicea and Cernăuți towns, and 105 thematic film screenings were organised in high schools.

Local community contribution

“United Waters of Romania” is a project initiated in 2019, whereby Ivan Patzacin Association - Miii 23 consolidates an alliance of organisations concerned with democratising access to water, participatory water management, promoting nature-based solutions, educating young people and valuing natural and cultural heritage. To increase the public interest in this regard, United Waters of Romania carried out awareness, education and activism actions, establishing the communities’ emotional connection to water. More than 25,000 inhabitants in 40 towns took part in mini-festivals with the community water topic, where children found out how boats are built and what they can do to protect the waters.

“Romania’s waters carry with them, towards the Danube and the Delta, the positive and negative energies of the places they cross and their people. A healthy, clean and well-managed river brings happiness, prosperity and contributes to the place identity.”

“Ivan PATZACIN 1948-2021
Multiple Olympic, world and European rowing champion

“A loved and maintained river is a gold medal!”

Source: Florin Duțulescu

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38,531 hybrid vehicles, which led to a total of 26,277 electric vehicles for the public transport and personal cars, and have encouraged the imports and purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles for Romania. The equipment increased from 965.7 million lei in 2016, to 4,214.26 million lei in 2021. The energy from renewable sources in the final energy consumption was 23.6% in 2021, decreasing by 1.4% compared to 2016.

Final energy consumption increased in 2021 by 15.2% compared to 2020, reaching 25.3 million tonnes of oil equivalent. The share of energy consumption of about 81%, while for all other buildings, offices, schools, hospitals, shopping centres and other non-residential buildings was 19% of all final energy consumption.

**Overview**

Romania owns balanced and diversified mixed energy, benefiting from important internal resources, distributed in the entire country.

Electricity is the most accessible form of energy in Romania, with a household connection rate more than 90% followed by the proportion connected to natural gas of about 44%. The length of natural gas distribution pipes showed an increase by 14.6% in 2021, 45.4 thousand km respectively, compared to 2016. In Romania, the energy independence in 2021 was 67.4%.

Final energy consumption increased in 2021 by 15.2% compared to 2016, reaching 25.3 million tonnes of oil equivalent. The share of energy from renewable sources in the final energy consumption was 23.6% in 2021, decreasing by 1.4% compared to 2016.

In Romania, the environmental performance in the transport sector showed an increase by 7.7% in 2021, by 15% compared to 2016. The production value of electric and more resource-efficient transport equipment increased from 965.7 million lei in 2016, to 4,214.26 million lei in 2021.

The National Programme for carrying out works to increase energy efficiency in single-family dwellings, beneficiaries-individuals and from 2021 the Programme for increasing energy efficiency and smart energy management in public buildings have been implemented.

**Challenges**

- Inaccessibility to energy and price sustainability
- Increase the share of energy from renewable sources in the final gross consumption at 30.7%
- Extend the level of in-depth renovation and eligible measures for obtaining public funding
- Develop the university and post-graduate programmes for continuous professional training related to “nearly zero energy building” renovation

**Response to COVID-19 pandemic**

In order to facilitate the National Programme on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Transport, by promoting energy-efficient road transport vehicles, in 2020 the Administration of the Environment Fund adapted to the restrictive conditions to combat COVID-19 diseases. Thus, the participation of applicants who were legal persons to the Rablo Plus Programme was carried out only by online mail. 88 applications have been approved for funding, in total 49 hybrid electric cars and 112 purely electric cars, worth approx. €12 million.

**Leave no one behind**

Romania ranks first regarding the rate of increase of electricity prices in the EU, by 25% in August 2021 compared to August 2020, compared to the EU average of 9.2% and ranks 10th in terms of natural gas price increase, with 20.5% in August 2021 compared to August 2020, compared to the EU average of 14.2%.

The Romanian Government adopted measures to support the categories of vulnerable persons to compensate the energy price by capping prices and compensate energy bills from 1 November 2021 to 31 March 2022 and temporary energy support measures for the same period.

To compensate the increase of the fuel price, which impacted the standards of living for population and the activity of the economic operators, the Government granted discounts for gas and diesel prices by €0.1/litre, VAT included, at the selling price.

**Next steps**

In order to meet the RES - Renewable energy sources targets, Romania will implement policies and measures meant to reduce the energy consumption and encourage the use of RES in relevant sectors; heating and cooling electricity and transports, maximising synergies between the actions of the Strategy of Energy and the Integrated National Plan for Energy and Climate Change by 2030.

To reduce the specific energy consumption in residential sector, it is necessary to review the technical construction regulations to stimulate the thorough renovation of existing buildings, including regular reviews and updates of energy performance standards, based on the total cost optimization methodology.

The increase in the energy efficiency of heritage buildings is provided in the intervention methodology for non-invasive approach of energy efficiency in buildings of historic and architectural value and aims to create a framework for intervention to optimise the energy performance of buildings of historic and architectural value through non-invasive methods and approaches.

**Good practices**

In recent years, Engie Romania and Habitat for Humanity Romania have developed a partnership aimed to rehabilitate a number of buildings, belonging to non-governmental organizations and educational institutions to reduce the energy consumption and implicitly the energy-related costs. Thus, the energy rehabilitation of more than half of SOS Children’s Villages buildings in Bucharest and the installation of a photovoltaic panel system with energy storage and grid injection, which has the potential to cover a significant percentage of the energy consumption of the entire complex and the accreditation of the organization as a prosumer were performed, SOS Children’s Villages in Bucharest became an energy efficient social community.

Also, Buhnici House is an example of best practices, being the first premium passive house in Eastern Europe, included in the top 10 passive houses in the world in 2018, being equipped with cutting-edge technologies, HVAC system, photovoltaic solar panels and others. At the same time, Buhnici House is the first electricity prosumer registered in Romania.
Economic growth, promote entrepreneurship, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainable tourism, create decent jobs including for young people and persons with disabilities and access to funding for all.
Overview
Major investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure and optical fibre networks with average uploading speed of more than 100 Mbps, made Romania an example to be followed. The transport infrastructure includes airports, road, rail, ship and intermodal terminal networks. The road network is about 86,000 km long. The share of modernized roads in the national network witnessed a 7.5 p.p. increase from 2016 to 2021, reaching 47.1%. The road traffic death rate has decreased from 11.6 deaths to 100,000 inhabitants in 2016, to 10.7 in 2021, being among the highest at the EU level. The value added in manufacturing industry as share of GDP decreased by 1.6 p.p. compared to 2016, to 19.5% in 2021. In 2021, the manufacturing industry workforce was 17.1% as share of total workforce, decreasing by 13.5 p.p. compared to 2016. In 2021, the number of researchers involved in the RDI activity was 26,700, out of 141 of other countries at international level in terms of innovation and 53% in research and development. Extra-curricular participation of pupils in the secondary education and/or non-university tertiary education or students in international competitions with an obvious technical and scientific component, which is favourable to the transition to understanding a RDI project, is carried out almost exclusively on a voluntary basis and on individual initiative, at the level of educational establishments, research organisations or non-governmental institutions using their own budgets. To ensure a critical mass of young people wanting a career in research, in 2022, MINORD launched a research career public campaign among pupils and students, through the Henri Coandă Programme for funding the participation of young people in the technical and scientific competitions and rewarding the results obtained in such competitions. The expected changes in the mindset of pupils and students, by implementing the programme refer to: stimulating the interest in research, science and digitalisation by early taking part in RDI activities; developing the team work abilities and skills and the abilities and skills necessary to carry out RDI activities; creating a legal framework required to form a new generation open to knowledge at international level, increasing the number of Romanian young people wanting to stay and carry out RDI activities in Romania, after they benefited from research scholarships. The expected changes in the mindset of pupils and students, by implementing the programme refer to: stimulating the interest in research, science and digitalisation by early taking part in RDI activities; developing the team work abilities and skills and the abilities and skills necessary to carry out RDI activities; creating a legal framework required to form a new generation open to knowledge at international level, increasing the number of Romanian young people wanting to stay and carry out RDI activities in Romania, after they benefited from research scholarships. Challenges
- Simplification of procedures for approving transport infrastructure extension, modernisation and interconnection projects
- Significant reduction in number of road accidents
- Stopping brain drain and ensuring the conditions to develop a research career in Romania
- Increase in RDI investments, acceleration of know-how transfer and technological transfer

Next steps
The National Strategy of Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation is directed to the development of Romania through research and innovation. The strategy's main objectives include: increase in financing for research and innovation, increase in cooperation between researchers and companies, stimulation of technological transfer, development of digital skills and artificial intelligence, supporting the entrepreneurship and start-ups, and sustainable development and environmental protection.

The Action programme for development of railway infrastructure and modal transfer to the railway of the passenger transport flows and goods shall continue the modernisation and extension of the existing railway network, the increase of railway transport performances, the development of facilities and services for passengers and operators, and the promotion of model transfer to the railway by various incentives. The development process of Henri Coandă International Airport shall be accelerated, and the implementation of the navigation concept based on performance shall continue in 16 Romanian airports. Road safety is a public health problem in Romania and, the implementation of the Strategy of national road safety aims to stop by 2030, to reduce the number of road accidents and their consequences, by 2030, by improving the road safety management system, the road infrastructure and vehicles, by promoting safer vehicles, and by ensuring safer areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

The National Plan of RDI is stimulated until 2027, the public and private investments in RDI, the transfer of technology and innovation between the public and private sector, the improvement of infrastructure by modernisation and endowment of INCO, the increase in the number of researchers and the improvement of the working conditions for them by developing interdisciplinary research projects and by promoting the career in research.

Good practice
The National Strategy of Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation, 2022 - 2027 is the programme document designating the vision for the RDI system, supporting excellence, rewarding performance, and enabling public-private collaboration. It supports the achievement of target 9.5 set out in Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030: Boost scientific research and modernise the technological capacity of the industrial sector; encourage innovation and significantly increase the number of employees in research and development and increase public and private spending on research and development.

The National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation has been drafted in close correlation with all 8 regional smart specialisation strategies which are under the coordination of the Regional Development Agencies and which identify the priority intervention sectors and contribute to the increase in the regional economic competitiveness by maximising the identified research and innovation potential.

The strategy is multi-yearly supported by about €12 billion for the period 2022-2027, structured on 10 financing programmes aiming at the concentration and connection of excellence at the scientific border, in agreement with the societal challenges; broad mobilisation of businesses towards innovation; supporting the development of local, regional and national innovation ecosystems associated with smart specialisations to support advancement in global value-added chains; European and international cooperation.

Smart specialization strategies for Romania’s 8 development regions with access links
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

"Research and innovation must be the tip of the spear for the development of Romania. The document adopted today by the Government is more than a simple strategy; it is, in fact, an economic growth vision of the country based on the high-added value investments and accelerated productivity. We emphasise meritocracy, the recognition of individual researchers’ and research organisations’ performance based on objective assessments, with transparent indicators and criteria. ... At the same time, this strategy brings opening to a partnership with the private sector and internationalisation... We want Romania to be a clear option on the world research map. Last but not least, a key milestone of this vision is the transfer of technology, know-how and innovation to the Romanian private sector."

Sebastian BURDUJA
Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation

Response to COVID-19 pandemic
The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the acceleration of digitalisation in Romania, having an impact on various activities, such as public services, healthcare, education, governing and trade.

In the healthcare sector, the pandemic has drove an increase in the demand for digital healthcare solutions, such as telemedicine and online appointment services. In 2020, the protection measures taken in the epidemiologic risk situation led to the supplementation of the Health Reform Law allowing the development of telemedicine platforms. The purpose of such platforms is to facilitate remote medical services, without the need for the physical presence of the medical staff and the patient, to determine the diagnosis, indicate the treatment, monitor illnesses or indicate disease prevention methods, in a secure manner, through information technology and electronic means of communication.

Leave no one behind
The migration of youth with intellectual potential makes the Romanian human capital in RDI field vulnerable. In 2019, Romania was ranked 55th out of 141 of other countries at international level in terms of innovation and 53rd in research and development. Extra-curricular participation of pupils in the secondary education and/or non-university tertiary education or students in international competitions with an obvious technical and scientific component, which is favourable to the transition to understanding a RDI project, is carried out almost exclusively on a voluntary basis and on individual initiative, at the level of educational establishments, research organisations or non-governmental institutions using their own budgets.

Policies and measures
In 2016, the General Master Transport Plan, was designed as the blueprint for the development of the transport network. This comprehensive plan was later complemented by specific programs managed by the National Road Infrastructure Company, focusing on enhancing transport infrastructure in rural areas, as well as the construction and modernization of highways and national roads. Strategic programs have been implemented to enhance the infrastructure of the aviation sector, specifically focusing on airport development. Romania takes part in the Single European Sky ATM Research 3 Joint Undertaking Programme – Single European Sky to implement the navigation procedures based on performance.

To stimulate the development of a career in RDI field, changes were made to the Fiscal Code for tax exemption, and the legislative framework allowing the increase in the maximum salary ceiling has been created in the RDI projects up to €50/hour.

Roma尼亚’s goal
Develop safe and sustainable infrastructure, modernise technological capacities of industrial sectors, foster innovations and increase the number of employees working in research.
Overview

In order to accelerate the European integration process and to efficiently allocate the cohesion funds corresponding for specific needs, an administrative division has been carried out on 8 development regions in Romania.

Reducing inequalities represents an objective of interest for Romania from at least two perspectives: disparity in comparison with the EU member states and regional disparities within the country.

The at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate values have led the country and 7 out of Romania’s 8 development regions above the EU average in 2021, with the exception of the Bucharest-Ilfov region where the population is exposed to a very low risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2021, the 4 most developed regions registered a decrease in poverty and social exclusion rates on average by approx. 15% compared to 2016. The other regions recording a value over the national average, continued to maintain at a high disparity level, with a low average decrease compared to 2016, i.e. about 6%. The South-East region remains the most vulnerable one, with a 1.7% decrease in 2021 compared to 2016, and with a 30% disparity level compared to the most developed region.

Another dimension of the economic inequality between regions was illustrated by the average net income per household. While in Bucharest-Ilfov region, in 2021, the indicator value was €1,737, in the least developed region it was almost half, €937. The evolution between 2016-2021 highlighted that the less developed regions, an insignificant increase has been registered in relation to the national average, which reveals the need to step up efforts in reducing disparities among regions.

In 2022, 47.7% of the population was living in the countryside and 52.3% in the urban areas. Although the monthly average total income for a household increased in the rural area, on an average from €540 in 2016 to €520 in 2021, the rural-urban income disparity has doubled in the same period of time, from about €200 to approximately €600. The disparities between regions and the inequality of the salary level in rural-urban areas have led to labour migration phenomenon in other regions within Romania or in Europe, with a visible effect in the depopulation of villages or small towns.

Besides the residence, the income inequalities can also be noticed by age groups. In 2021, the rate of young people neither in employment nor in education or training was 18.0%, with 0.6 p.p. higher than in 2016.

Response to war in Ukraine

The invasion started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine brought a new challenge for Romania regarding inequalities: a wave of more than 3.2 million Ukrainian refugees who entered/crossed the border to Romania until December 2022. Of them, more than 2.5 million received direct support. At the end of 2022, there were over 100,000 Ukrainian citizens who chose to stay in Romania. The Romanian Government and the civil society allocated resources to ensure the basic needs, both for the protection and inclusion of refugees. More than €100 million were allocated from the state budget and the international partners, more than 20 laws were enacted or amended regarding the management of persons displaced from Ukraine, more than 1,500 local authorities and 300 non-governmental organisations were involved in the provision of direct support granted to Ukrainian refugees. In order to ensure the Romanian and access to health and education services, a digital platform was also developed to easily access information to help the inclusion of Ukrainians.

Leave no one behind

There are approximately 569,500 Roma people in Romania, according to the 2022 Census, the second largest national minority. In fact, the Roma population might be larger, as sociologists noted the tendency for Roma people to avoid declaring their ethnicity in the Census.

According to a report of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, most of Roma people in Romania live in overcrowded places, leave school since children and are exposed to the risk of poverty. For example, the at-risk-of-poverty rate of Roma children exposed to the risk of poverty increased from 2016 to 2021, from 78% to 79%, while the percentage of non-Roma children among general population is 30%. The Romanian Government implements measures to support the reducing of inequalities faced by the Roma people. Besides the general measures related to combating discrimination and the rights granted for Roma minority education, in 2011 the National Education Law introduced a measure that grants Roma candidates the right to benefit from a number of guaranteed places from the state budget. Therefore, at the beginning of each school year, high schools, vocational schools and higher education institutions offer places for which only Roma can apply.

Public-private partnership

Together We BUILD People represents hundreds of campaigns supported by the private sector, local authorities, teachers and parents of Roma pupils who, at the initiative of the Book and Association united their efforts to contribute to the renovation and endowment of schools in villages. Being representative for Romania, this public-private partnership supports the reducing of school drop-out in rural areas, providing the pupils the chance to quality education in safe, modern and friendly buildings offering a perspective for a sustainable future for the Roma community. The exemplary and effective mobilisation has led to dozens of renovated and equipped rural schools, thousands of children per year who willingly come to school, better school performances and the premises for a fulfilled life with long-term impact.

Challenges

- Besides/along external migration, Romania also faces internal migration, among regions, given the fact that economic growth is rather unevenly distributed. A challenge for our country is to combat and prevent entering a vicious circle - people leave lesser developed areas to obtain economic welfare in the more developed regions, and the poorer regions are less likely to reduce poverty as they face a shortage of well-trained force labour. Considering that the regions with poor economic performance are not attractive for investors, it is a challenge for the national authorities to redirect investments in sustainable industrialisation
- Improvement of the young people neither in employment nor in education or training situation

Next steps

The National Regional Programmes 2021-2027 are the main financial instruments that Romania can access at EU level for the cohesion with the Community and the mitigation of disparities between regions.

Through the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, 8 Regional Operational Programmes and the priority axes reflecting the development vision have been approved to reduce the gaps between and within the regions which aim the financing for competitiveness, innovation, digitalisation and dynamic enterprises; Smart cities; environmentally friendly cities; development of central heating systems; accessibility; education; attractiveness from a touristic and economical point of view.

The National Employment Strategy supports the valorisation of young people’s economic potential, including NEET, by increasing the employment rate and promoting sustainable employment among young people, inclusively by implementing the reinforced Youth Guarantee.

In order to support the Roma people and to ensure the necessary framework for them to reach their maximum potential, the Romanian Government adopted the Strategy for Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority. The strategy highlights five main objectives: improving housing conditions and infrastructure in vulnerable Roma communities; ensuring access of Romanian Roma citizens to inclusive quality education; boosting Roma employment in line with labour market requirements, so as to avoid the segmentation of skills and opportunities and allow their professional evolution; improving the state-of-health of vulnerable Roma communities members; supporting research, preservation and promoting the Roma cultural heritage and identity.
Overview

There are 2,862 communes and 379 cities in Romania, including the capital city. Despite the fact that urban population has decreased in the last 25 years, especially in small towns, the built area has extended, often without coherent planning. Overall, the overcrowding rate in Romania was among the highest in Europe, in 2021 being 47%, compared to the EU average of 17.1%. Rate of severe housing deprivation has decreased from 19.8% in 2016 to 14.3% in 2020.

The housing stock in the Romanian cities is dominated by housing in apartment blocks, containing 67.6% of the urban housing stock, and the private dwellings represent 9.6% of the entire housing stock. In the urban area, 99% of households have a water supply system, 93.9% are connected to the public sewerage network, 57.9% receive gas from the public network and 99.8% are connected to the power supply network.

All urban agglomerations include islands of poverty, spatially segregated communities affected by homelessness, low employment and low access to education. In April 2022, there were 393 informal settlements of approximately 220,000 inhabitants.

The number of deaths caused by respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, influenced by air pollution in the community, showed an increase from 163.3 thousand persons in 2016 to 240.0 thousand persons in 2021.

Vulnerability of communities to pressure from natural phenomena, including earthquakes, imposed specific prevention and control measures locally, regionally and nationally. The number of preventive information activities in emergency situations increased three times compared to 2016, reaching 68.2 thousand in 2022. The annual average rate of increase in the deceased and injured persons due to natural disasters was -20.61%. By raising non-reimbursable European funds, 1,963 equipment and utility vehicles for intervention in case of floods, landslides and earthquakes were purchased.

The cultural heritage is a resource and an enabling factor in the community, the rehabilitation of historic and religious monuments reducing negative environmental impacts in towns and cities.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

In order to prevent and combat the effects of the pandemic, from March to May 2020, temporary measures were ordered to protect public health, simultaneously with the limitation or interruption of essential social and economic activities throughout the territory, including by limiting the exercise of a number of fundamental rights and freedoms, without which the other undertaken actions could not have had the desired effect. In 2020, the National Centre for Intervention, Coordination and Management, an inter-institutional body for the continuous operational management of emergency situations during the pandemic, was operationalised. Subsequently, with the improvement of the situation, the measures were adapted in order to mitigate gradually and area measures influenced by the epidemiological situation were taken, so as to ensure the protection of the rights to life, physical integrity and protection of health.

The measures were divided into three levels: increase in the response capacity, ensuring the communities’ resilience and reducing the impact of the type of risk. They aimed at the following fields: economic, health, labour and social protection, transports and infrastructure, education and research, youth and sports, culture and arts, insolvency and justice.

During the pandemic, the Inspectorates for Emergency Situations conducted 385,426 specific missions: 7,005 transports of persons suspected of being infected, 62,766 transports of confirmed infected persons, 2,215 transports/distributions of protection equipment and means of intervention, 10,361 qualified first aid missions for persons suspected of being infected, 83,373 personnel, intervention equipment and buildings decontamination missions, as well as 212,156 other missions related to COVID-19 transport of samples, installations of tents, arrangement, operationalisation and administration of compulsory facilities for isolation and treatment of confirmed patients, etc.

Leave no one behind

The public services offered by institutions responsible with the management of emergency situations were provided free of charge, in a non-discriminatory manner, by a specialised network of 3,657 units and 212,156 other services covering the entire national territory. During the pandemic, at the level of territorial administrative units, the Public Health Directorates permanently operated, which in collaboration with the Inspectorates for Emergency Situations managed all calls received from the population.

Challenges

- Increasing the resilience of communities to disasters, including seismic risk
- Providing quality services, especially in rural areas
- Improving the housing stock, public spaces and air quality
- Conservation and rehabilitation of historic residential buildings and cultural monuments

Next steps

In order to overcome the challenges and reach the proposed objectives, the action plans for the Strategy of Housing until 2025, the Integrated Urban Development Strategy for Resilient, Green, Inclusive and Competitive Cities until 2030, the Strategy of Seismic Risk Reduction, the Strategy of Historic Monuments Protection until 2030, the Strategy of Medium and Long Term Flood Risk Management until 2035, the National Management Plan of Disaster Risk, and the National Programme of Air Pollution Control shall be implemented.

Good practices

Romania is one of the first EU member states implementing the project UNESCO Culture Indicators 2030, an important step for measuring and monitoring the progress of cultural contribution to the SDG implementation at national and local level. The indicators may provide a valuable contribution to Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2010, and to the future sectoral strategy in the field of culture, currently under development by the Ministry of Culture, in partnership with the National Institute for Research and Cultural Training. The set includes indicators related to multicultural education, cultural participation, combating illicit traffic of mobile cultural goods.

The proposed indicators also include indicators 14.4.1 and 4.7.1 of Agenda 2030. In order to obtain the information necessary to calculate the indicators, the data at national level publicly provided by the following authorities and public institutions has been taken into consideration: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Labour Inspection, Ministry of Education/National Authority for Qualifications, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Institute of Statistics, National Heritage Institute, Department for Interethnic Relations, National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, National Bank of Romania, National Civil Servants Agency.
Policies and measures

Since 2005, the Government has established mandatory extended producer liability schemes for all packaging materials. The National Waste Management Strategy and National Waste Management Plan have set a target of halving per capita food waste by 2020, reducing 65% of municipal waste by 2023, recycling 65% of packaging waste by 2025, separately collecting hazardous household waste by 2022, and producer liability schemes for all packaging materials. The Food Waste Reduction Law introduced a first regulation of the minimum requirements related to the low impact on environment for certain groups of products and services.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

The changes in the population’s behaviour and consumption, determined by the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to an increased annual rate of waste of approximately 4.8 million tons in 2020, of which about 70% were landfilled. The lack of infrastructure for separate collection, i.e., low rate of reuse and recycling of waste, contributed to the failure to meet the targets in terms of municipal waste management and slow transition to the circular economy.

Overview

Romania has established the strategic vision related to the transition from the linear economic model with a high consumption of resources, to the efficient circular model in terms of resources, wastes, and green public procurement directed to sustainability.

In 2020, in order to produce a GDP unit, six times more material resources than at EU level were used. The rate of improvement in material resource productivity declined, recorded during the period 2016-2020, hindered by the severe decrease by 51.5% of the number of employees in the sector of goods and environmental services, was supported by the increase by 83.3% of the GVA share from the environmental technologies to GDP. The productivity of material resources recorded the lowest value of 1.27 thousand lei/ton in 2020. A continuous progress was recorded for the responsible use of energy resources where the energy productivity reached the maximum limit of €5.3/kWh equivalent to the oil in 2020.

The amount of waste has been on a downward trend, in 2020 being 143 million tons, 1.7 tons per inhabitant respectively, compared to 171 million tons in 2016. The total quantity of collected household waste increased to 4.8 million tons in 2020 compared to 3.8 million in 2016. The total amount of household waste collected increased to 4.8 million tons in 2020, up from 3.8 million tons in 2016, and also in 2020 the recycling rates were 39.9% for packaging waste and 11.9% for million tonnes in 2020, up from 3.8 million tonnes in 2016, and also in million tons, 7.3 tons per inhabitant respectively, compared to 177 the transition to decoupling the economic development from the use of natural resources, and environmental degradation and determines the directions for action: reducing the raw material consumption and consumer goods, reducing the impact of waste and waste streams production, management and disposal activities on the environment, improving policy coherence and governance, communication and collaboration between local, regional and national authorities. Under the coordination of Department of Sustainable Development, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of NSCE is going to be finalized, and fields such as education and professional training, research, development and innovation, public procurement and digitalization shall be essential actions to facilitate the circular transformation in economy.

To support and stimulate the business sector and the civil society in adopting and implementing the principles and values of the sustainable development concept, Romania undertook the elaboration and operationalization of the Romanian Sustainability Code. At the end of 2022, BOD completed RSC and the Guidelines for its use. The Code is a practical instrument aimed at entities subject to non-financial reporting legal provisions and provides clear guidance as regards the content requirements and the sustainability report preparation process. The reports published on the Code platform can be accessed in a transparent manner by all interested parties and may help both identify best practices developed by the reporting entities, and may also support investors or other entities which make financial or commercial decisions based on the sustainability practices of the reporting companies.

Next steps

The National Strategy for Circular Economy creates the framework of transition to decoupling the economic development from the use of natural resources, and environmental degradation and determines the directions for action: reducing the raw material consumption and consumer goods, reducing the impact of waste and waste streams production, management and disposal activities on the environment, improving policy coherence and governance, communication and collaboration between local, regional and national authorities. Under the coordination of Department of Sustainable Development, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of NSCE is going to be finalized, and fields such as education and professional training, research, development and innovation, public procurement and digitalization shall be essential actions to facilitate the circular transformation in economy.

Challenges

- Staged growth of circularity and food waste reduction rates
- Regulation of green public procurement, satisfying the needs to ensure the green transition and to plan the public environmentally friendly purchases
- Development of local production to the detriment of imported products and materials, consolidation of economic competitiveness and employment, priority promotion of innovation and research in the field of circular economy
- Responsible and sustainable supply of raw materials, preservation, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, preventing the generation of waste and sustainable waste management
- Promotion of responsible consumption and environmental education, ecosystem protection and citizen health

Step

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Civil society initiative

The Recycling Map of Vitor Plus Association is an informative-educational initiative, which, by means of the sustainability platform After Us facilitated the information of consumers about the effects of the extra consumption and food waste, the importance of separate collection and recycling contributing to resource and raw material savings. The main platform instrument is the national recycling map of the 16,000 collection points of paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, electrical and electronic equipment, textile, expired medicine and used cooking oil. There is a dictionary about 65 types of materials, with information about how to collect in a separate manner, which items are recycled and which are not, as well as details of the recycling process, and it is attached to the map. The Recycling Map also conducts educational sessions for students in all grades. More than 50,000 pupils took part in the lessons made available by the teachers through the Recycling Map programme in 2022.
Roma nia’s goal
Consolidate Romania’s capacity for adaptation and resilience in order to combat the dangers associated with climate change and natural disasters by integrating measures to diminish and adapt to climate change and natural disasters, both in the form of strategies and national policies, and by planning for and increasing the level of education and awareness.

Overview
The yearly average temperature in Romania increased by 0.48 degrees between 2016 and 2021 according to meteorological data. Droughts have lasted longer, and more places now experience a shortage of soil water. There have been documented medium and high-intensity hazardous weather occurrences such as tornados, heavy rain, thunderstorms with hail, and heavy rain. A significant lack of precipitation in both the summer and the winter, together with a high frequency of hailstorms in the summer, are all results of the geographic location and the unique terrain.

The area protected with anti-hail and rainfall enhancement systems increased 4.3 times in 2022 compared to 2016.

Romania’s contribution to global GHG emissions is just 0.8% of global GHG emissions while its share of the EU’s overall emissions is less than 3%, with a 3.3% decline between 2016 and 2020. Romania met the EU goal of reducing GHG by 55% by 2030 in 2021, with a total GHG emission decrease of 71% when compared to the base year 1990.

Policies and measures
National efforts have been channelled into actions related to public policy and climate diplomacy. In the field of public policies, the main document is the National Strategy on Climate Change and Low-Carbon Growth and the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Low-Carbon Growth, supplemented by the National Defence Strategy, National Disaster Risk Management Plan, National Hail and Rainfall Increase System Development Programme, National Forest Strategy, etc.

In support of diplomacy efforts, the MEA launched the Climate Development Programme, National Forest Strategy, Risk Management Plan, National Hail and Rainfall Increase System, etc.

The Romanian Government funded both the operational running and operating costs of the national anti-hail and rainfall system on a yearly basis from 2018 to 2022, at both the national and regional levels, in order to cover a number of risks caused by extreme weather phenomena and vulnerable areas with potential for productive agriculture.

Challenges
- Integration of education for climate change and environment as cross-cutting issue, in all subjects and educational cycles, including training of teachers
- Raising awareness and informing the general public about climate change and its impacts to strengthen community resilience
- Supporting RIDI initiatives with results of measures taken in the view of reducing the risk of drought and vegetation fires
- Rebuilding and completing genetic databases, especially for native or endemic species

Response to climate changes challenges
The consequences related to climate changes have a significant impact on the communities, economy, infrastructure and environment.

Since 2016, RO-Alert population warning system, the Cell Broadcast type, was implemented in the event of the occurrence or imminent occurrence of major emergencies such as extreme weather events, floods or other situations which seriously threaten communities. 10,139 warning messages were sent by the end of 2021.

RO-ALERT system is operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department for Emergency Situations and is used in major situations in which life and health of citizens are endangered, in agreement with the Strategy of General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations consolidation and development.

Leave no one behind
Extreme weather events have a significant impact on farmers and rural communities since they jeopardize agricultural crops including vineyards, orchards, greenhouses, etc. as well as public and private infrastructure.

The Romanian Government funded both the operational running and operating costs of the national anti-hail and rainfall system on a yearly basis from 2018 to 2022, at both the national and regional levels, in order to cover a number of risks caused by extreme weather phenomena and vulnerable areas with potential for productive agriculture.

Roma nia’s Long-Term Strategy for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions is being designed to reinforce climate change policies in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and the EU goal of climate neutrality. The Strategies for Risk Disaster Reduction by 2015 and the Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation by 2030 with a 2050 outlook will be developed. The National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan will be updated, with new national goals for cutting domestic GHG emissions and raising. The national targets for reducing domestic GHG emissions, raising the proportion of renewable energy in final energy consumption, enhancing energy efficiency across all economic sectors, and raising the degree of internal electricity market interconnection to the European energy market, as well as policies and measures to achieve these targets, will be revised in line with the EU targets under the EU for EU initiative.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Romania outlines the necessary reforms and investment objectives for 15 key components, each of which has an influence on national policy to combat climate change and safeguard the environment.

In order to accelerate the education for sustainable development, the organization of adult professional training programs, national contests on environmental topics, national conferences, information campaigns for the general public or dedicated to certain target groups and other events are necessary to speed up, according to the National Strategy on Education for the Environment and Climate Change 2023–2030.

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Local community initiative
The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is the largest initiative in Europe which supports the local authorities to transpose into practice the GHG emission reduction ambitions by 2050 and the increase in the resilience before climate change, adaptation measures, green and digital skills for the jobs of the future. In Romania, there are 183 cities and towns, which signed the Covenant of Mayors. The population share covered by the signatories of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy was 34.3% in 2021, being reduced by 3.4 p.p. compared to 2016. An annual increase average rate of 1.1% compared to 1.87% recorded from 2016 to 2021 is necessary in order to reach the 2021 24.3% EU level in 2030.

Sibiu County Council drafted a Best Practice and Awareness Guide on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of Sibiu County, with the role of providing policy-makers with documents that enable scientifically supported decision-making, but also to raise citizens’ awareness, identifying and prioritizing the sectors most vulnerable to climate change in Sibiu.

Civil society action
The first interactive museum dedicated to the environmental education and climate change in Romania was designed in Bucharest by the Act for Tomorrow Association. It is located in an important shopping center to attract more visitors and includes several interactive devices with educational purpose, among which the young people are invited to discover information about nature. It is an environmentally friendly education initiative, based on non-formal learning experiences and the combination of theoretical elements with practical and engaging experiences. The initiative contributes to increasing the awareness of problems related to climate change and environment mainly among pupils, but also among parents, teachers and young students. The initiative is supporting the Green Week national programme.

Good practice in administration
Drafted in 2022, the Presidential Administration Report on Limiting Climate Change and its Impact: Integrated Approach for Romania demonstrates the president’s dedication to supporting public policies that aim to curb climate change and improve the standard of living for Romanians.

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Romania’s goal
Prevent and reduce the marine pollution, sustainably manage and protect marine ecosystems, preserve coastal areas and practice of sustainable fishing

Overview
Romania has 245 km of coast at the Black Sea, a semi-enclosed sea, with relatively low salinity compared to the oceans and a large accumulation of hydrogen sulphide, which make a vulnerable ecological unit, by limiting the diversity of species. The almost total absence of tides does not allow the dilution of contaminants or natural purification phenomena found in oceans. 3.7% marine species were identified in the Black Sea, most of which being invertebrates and plants, and the oxygen is found only in the upper layer of only 200 m.

The National Protected Marine Area Network includes 2 marine reserves, 13 national protected areas of national interest in the southern coastal area, of which 5 are IUCN natural reserves of category IV, 3 are IUCN natural reserves of category III and 5 are scientific reserves of category I. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve occupies the entire northern coastal area.

The Danube River is the collector and the emissary to the Black Sea of area waters.

The condition of coastal bodies of water is mostly determined by the Danube, but also by the local pollution sources located in the Romanian and Ukrainian territory of the Black Sea. The number of coastal sites with excellent quality swimming water was 42 in 2021, increasing by 23.5% compared to 2016.

The volume of wastewater evacuated in the Black Sea was 68.1 million m³ in 2021, increasing by 4.9% compared to 2016, while the quantities of pollutants fell on average by 38%.

Although the quantity of fish stocks biologically decreased by 15.7% from 2016 to 2021, there were increases for cod by 17.2%, turbot by 27.3 million in 2021, increasing by 45.2% compared to 2016.

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Although the quantity of fish stocks biologically decreased by 15.7% from 2016 to 2021, there were increases for cod by 17.2%, turbot by 27.3 million in 2021, increasing by 45.2% compared to 2016.

Policies and measures
The regulatory framework for maritime spatial planning aiming at the sustainability of maritime economies, development and use of marine areas has been established by the responsibility of the maritime spatial planning committee and public administration authorities which are competent in the field. The Management Plan, which transposed the Directive 2010/69/EU, has provided the analysis, planning and organisation of human activities in marine waters, in order to meet cross-sectoral and cross-border environmental, economic, social and safety objectives in promoting the sustainable development and growth of the blue economy.

In order to reach the good environmental condition of the marine region Black Sea, the Marine Strategy and Programme of Measures prohibiting programmes, projects and activities that contraven management plans in marine protected areas have been implemented to protect and preserve the marine biodiversity, reduce and eliminate pollution with marine waste, including plastic, contaminants.

The preservation of fish stocks and, especially, economically valuable species or threatened species, was annually regulated, establishing fishing prohibition periods and areas, for the protection and biological recovery of living aquatic resources.

Leave no one behind
Anthropogenic pressures on the ecological status of pelagic habitats are generated by the increase in the abundance of algal species, degradation of water quality through decreased transparency, accumulation of gelatinous organisms, hypoxic events, altered community structure and trophic relationships in the marine ecosystem due to the removal of primary predators by fishing activities, predominance of small pelagic species exerting top-down control over the food chain, favours the emergence of invasive species, disruption of the food chain through significant increases in jellyfish biomass, and increased ecosystem instability.

The social and economic consequences of these anthropogenic pressures over the pelagic habitats make vulnerable the human communities in the Danube Delta and marine coast area and are particularly evident in fisheries, with reduced catches of commercial fish species, job losses and loss of income from fishing.

Other effects are seen in the decreasing attractiveness of the tourism sector, increased risk factors to human health, increased costs for other effects are seen in the decreasing attractiveness of the tourism sector, increased risk factors to human health, increased costs for sectors, in particular the recreation and tourism sector, increased risk factors to human health, increased costs for sectors, in particular the recreation and tourism sector, disruption of people’s ability to ensure food security and potential international conflicts resulting from competition for marine bio-resources.

In this context, in 2021, World Bank, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests and partners assumed the planning of a regional approach to meet this challenge through the Regional Black Sea Blue Economy and Development Project, funded by Global Environment Fund.

Challenges
- Sustainable use of maritime space and marine resources
- Maintaining the usefulness of land and maritime space in the context of urban development and mass tourism
- Preservation of habitat of aquatic ecosystems and maintenance of marine biodiversity threatened by the amplification of climate changes and anthropogenic activities

Next steps
The maritime spatial planning shall be implemented and monitored for the following 10 years by the central government authorities, with a reporting period every 3 years, for sustainable maritime spatial planning and exploitation. The planning sets out the future sustainable uses of marine waters in the Romanian sector of the Black Sea, through synergies created at sectoral policy level and mobilisation of relevant authorities and key blue economy actors, supporting resilience, competitiveness and inclusion. It aims at coordinated and systemic exploitation of maritime space and marine resources, land use, urban planning and tourism that does not threaten cultural assets, landscapes, integrity of natural habitats and ecological corridors, in line with the pillar of the EU’s 2030 New Territorial Agenda A Green Europe that supports greener and better livelihoods, climate neutral and resilient cities and regions.

In agreement with the EU Strategy, the network of protected natural areas will be extended to cover at least 10% of the marine area, i.e. 10% of strictly protected areas. In addition, two important marine protected areas of ecological or biodiversity importance have been identified in the Romanian sector of the Black Sea.

Good practice
Since 1938, the Mircea school ship has served as one of the Romanian Navy’s emblems. The ship is a three-masted, 44-meter-tall Class A bar-style sailing ship that can sail both under sail and with a motor. It has 23 sails with a combined sail area of 1,750 square meters.

As an educational space for future navigators, the Mircea can sail using both sails and motor power. In 2022, the training ship was recognized as the Sustainable Ambassador of Romania and incorporated sustainable practices into its educational program, providing knowledge on understanding the mechanisms through which sustainable development brings benefits not only to the economy but also to the environment.

The Mircea school ship arranges guided tours at ports of call to showcase sustainable activities and concepts for circular economy that are geared toward Zero Waste at standard at sea. The sailing vessel is the only ship of its kind to go through the audit stages, which include appointing an audit officer and putting the ship on a trajectory of actions leading to the accreditation of the ship as a Zero Waste benchmark.

Zero waste refers to the conservation of all resources via responsible production and consumption practices, responsible reuse, and recovery of goods, packaging, and materials, i.e., no incineration and no spills that endanger the environment or human health. In this regard, Mircea has been equipped with the following: 
- Plastic/carboid waste compactor
- Wastewater treatment system
- Propulsion equipment/sails
- Water desalination system
- Hydrocarbon separator
- Reverse osmosis system/water production for drinking purposes
Romania's goal

Sustainable conservation and use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests and eliminate illegal logging and clear-felling combat desertification, regenerate degraded land and soil, develop green infrastructure, conserve and protect wetlands, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, support research in the field

Overview

Located in the geographical centre of the continent, Romania has one of the richest natural heritages in Europe; a characteristic determined by the presence of five biogeographical regions in the country Pontic, Steppe, Alpine, Continental and Pannonian.

Large populations of mammals that are endangered throughout Europe, among which wolves, bears and Eurasian lynx, may be found in Romania. Regarding the flora, about 3,630 species of plants, of which 23 are declared to be monuments of nature. Romania is one of the few countries in Europe with virgin and quasi-virgin forests.

The area of NATURA 2000 land sites of 5,803 km² has placed Romania sixth in the EU ranking in 2021, and includes the Danube Delta world natural heritage, the Dinosaur Geoparks in Hateg County and Buzău County, 5 wetlands and 3 Danube Delta biosphere reserves, Rosia Podieni, and Retezat. The area of wetlands of a total international importance, which are included in the protected areas, increased by 18% in 2012 compared to 2016.

The share of wooden area related to the total area of the country was 27.1% in 2021, compared to 26.8% in 2016. However, the area of land in the forest fund covered by felling increased by 29.4%, and the area of land on which regenerations were performed decreased by 15.7% compared to 2016. On the other hand, in 2020, the volume of wood mass per foot was 24.3 m³/ha, higher by 2.7% million m³ compared to 2016, suggesting an increase in the wood stock and a potential forest regeneration capacity.

The area of land with soil improvement and soil erosion control works remained unchanged from 2016 to 2021, respectively 2,291 thousand hectares.

Response to climate change challenges

Romania undertook actions as a climate change crisis response.

Concerns for sustainable management and preservation of forests there were applied, including the increase in funding for the forest management and protection, combating the illegal felling and promoting sustainable forestry practices. It was implemented the computer system to identify the origin and traceability of timber/wood products, in order to obtain statistical information – Integrated Wood Tracking Information System, SUMUL 2.0.

Damaged habitats were rebuilt, such as wetlands and meadows to improve the biodiversity and increase the resistance of ecosystems upon the impact of climate change. Several protected areas, including national parks and natural reserves, for preservation of biodiversity were established, to promote and sustainable use of natural resources.

Leaving no one behind

In Romania, about 40% of the population live in rural areas and depend a lot on the natural resources to live. The disadvantaged rural communities are the most vulnerable to the complex of impacts associated with unsound land use practices through deforestation, land degradation combined with the effects of other hazards enhanced by climate change e.g., soil drought. In this context, the Romanian villages may face the intensification of pauperisation enhanced by climate change e.g., soil drought, floods. In this context, the Romanian villages may face the intensification of pauperisation.

Next steps

Through the MRPP, Pillar I Green Transition - Forests and protection of biodiversity, Romania set out the following targets: the requalification for sectors with impact on biodiversity; new areas of urban forests of at least 500,000 m² by 2023 or new wooded or reforested land of at least 3,156,000 m² by 2024; removing obstacles from the watercourses to restore connectivity for at least 1,701 ha of riparian habitat, restoration of at least 2,800 ha of meadow habitats in environmentally protected natural areas by 2026; deposal of lakes in the Danube Delta with a total area of 100 ha by 2026 to reduce eutrophication and maintain biodiversity, updating the management plans for 250 sites in the national protected natural area network by 2026.

Balanced integration of the social, environmental and economic functions in the management of forests shall be considered through the implementation of the National Forest Strategy, and the Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change by 2050 shall be related to the methods used to improve the adaptation and resilience increase of the social and economic systems to the effects of climate changes, in various areas and periods of time.

For a better ensure and update the regulation of the preservation and sustainable use of the natural heritage and its correlation with other legislation, the Romanian Government considers the review of the regimes of protected natural areas, preservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna.

Community good practice

According to the 2019 report related to the condition of forests drafted by the Directorate for Policies and Strategies in Forestry within the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, in Romania, the area of forests infested by forest pests showed an increasing trend. The project integrated forest protection through biological pest control - creation of nesting habitats for birds was implemented to prevent the pest reproduction and control in forests ecosystems, in the forest fund managed by Zetea Ranger’s Station, Harghita County. As the bird population density cannot increase without creating proper nesting habitats, the project's main purpose was to prevent the forest pest reproduction and control by designing and locating artificial nests. After conducting a study related to the identification of trees affected by pests and making the inventory of the proper nesting habitats for birds eating larvae and insects, 30 artificial nests were designed, manufactured and installed.

Civil society action

Vârşcăşti Natural Park was established in 2016 through the Government Decision, on the initiative of Vârşcăşti National Park Association. It is the first urban natural park in Romania, being located 5 km away from the city centre and it is the largest compact green area in Bucharest, covering 183 ha.

According to the description of Romanian habitats, Vârşcăşti Natural Park belongs to the group which encourages the following: the Menyanthes trifoliata, species of community interest Lindernia procumbens or Wolffia arrhiza, a very rare species, considered to be endangered at national level. The park’s flora inventory currently includes 331 species and subspecies, of which 266 are native.

Policies and measures

The programmatic documents which coordinated the policies for the exploitation, protection and preservation of natural resources were the Ordinance on the Regime of Protected Natural Areas; Preservation of Natural Habitats, Wild Flora and Fauna, National Strategy for Biodiversity Preservation, Law on Soil Use, Protection and Conservation of Forests, Forestry Code; operational programmes for the environmental development through biodiversity preservation measures, air monitoring and decontamination of historically polluted sites, integrated territorial investment programmes.

The legislative and institutional infrastructure intended to ensure the financial and management leverage has developed in recent years, and the National Protected Area Agency was established in 2016. The protected national area network was also extended and consolidated by new national parks, national parks and natural reserves. An example of this was the National Park of Mâzîn Mountains, established in 2018.

Of the coercive measures applied to protect the forests and combat illegal felling from 2021 to 2022, based on the Forestry Code were confiscated more than 181,000 m³ of wood, 16 cars, utility vehicles and trucks and around 2,022 woodcarts were ordered to be taken for confiscation purposes, according to the MIA statistics. At the same time, 2,320 administrative penalties amounting around €42 million, an average of more than 35 penalties daily, were applied for breaching the provisions of the Law on the establishment and sanctioning of forest offences. 26,403 offences provided by Forestry Code were notified and, in 4,830 cases, the court started the criminal investigation, an average of more than 36 notifications daily.

To cope with this situation, Romania implements several policies and programmes to control and monitor the forest felling and wood production by implementing and modernising the SUMUL system: to increase the forest coverage; irrigation and efficient use of water, more sustainable technologies and agricultural practices were implemented, an approach which encourages the efficient use of water and protects the soil to reduce the pedological drought impact; worked to extend and consolidate the protected area network, including the national parks and NATURA 2000 sites to combat the loss of biodiversity and protect the national habitats and species.

In addition, the Government provides support to the rural communities for the transition to more sustainable means and practices and to ensure that they have the resources they need to continue to thrive when faced with environmental challenges such as the Education and Employment Programme, Health Programme, Western Regional Programme, Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme, Sustainable Development Programme, Education and Employment Programme.

Challenges

- Improve the management of land from the forest fund covered by felling, in order to identify the best methods to restore the natural balance and transition to a circular economy.
- Increase the forested / regenerated land area, which had a declining trend from 2016 to 2021, comparing with 2018-2015, when it increased by +2.5%.
- Export valorisation of finite products or with a high degree of processing to the detriment of the unprocessed products and raw materials.
- Increase the area of land with land improvement and erosion control works.
- Increase the area of land with protection forests which are particularly important to combat desertification and restore the damaged land.

Next steps

Through the MRPP, Pillar I Green Transition - Forests and protection of biodiversity, Romania set out the following targets: the requalification for sectors with impact on biodiversity; new areas of urban forests of at least 500,000 m² by 2023 or new wooded or reforested land of at least 3,156,000 m² by 2024; removing obstacles from the watercourses to restore connectivity for at least 1,701 ha of riparian habitat, restoration of at least 2,800 ha of meadow habitats in environmentally protected natural areas by 2026; deposal of lakes in the Danube Delta with a total area of 100 ha by 2026 to reduce eutrophication and maintain biodiversity, updating the management plans for 250 sites in the national protected natural area network by 2026.

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For a better ensure and update the regulation of the preservation and sustainable use of the natural heritage and its correlation with other legislation, the Romanian Government considers the review of the regimes of protected natural areas, preservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna.
Overview

In the last decade, the total resident population of Romania has decreased from 20,121,641 in 2011 to 19,053,815 in 2021. The demographic drop has been caused both by the declining birth rate and by the massive migration to the EU. The medium and long-term negative effects show a decrease in the work force and damage to the sustainability of the social security systems.

According to the provisional results of the census conducted in 2021, 49.5% of the citizens declared to be of Romanian ethnicity, 6% of Hungarian ethnicity and 1.4% of Roma ethnicity, other ethnic groups declaring themselves of Ukrainian, German and Turkish ethnicity. Ethnic discrimination findings, in the share of petitions admitted by the National Council of Combating Discrimination, have decreased from 41.5% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2021. From 2016 to 2021, the National Council of Combating Discrimination, have admitted by the National Council of Combating Discrimination, have decreased from 41.5% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2021. From 2016 to 2021, the total resident population of Romania has decreased from 20,121,641 in 2011 to 19,053,815 in 2021. The annual average of persons finally convicted was 137.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Given the established legal framework and the fraud clues resulted from verifications conducted by the representatives of the National Public Health Institute, at the level of the Economic Crimes Investigation Directorate, the Acton Plan CERTIFICATE 2021 was drafted to prevent and combat frauds in the issuance of EU digital certificates on COVID-19. The purpose of the Acton Plan, implemented at the county police inspectors’ level, was to prevent, identify and investigate cases of fraud in the process of issuing EU digital certificates on COVID-19, to clarify and check inconsistencies notified by the Ministry of Health or citizens, to hold accountable those responsible, and to ensure a positive public perception of compliance with the measures required to prevent and control the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

State Roma Theatre, the Roma History and Culture Museum, the National Institute for Research and Preservation of Roma Culture and History, as well as events to promote the traditional Roma crafts.

Civil society contribution

The Institute for Research and Crime Prevention is a partner of the Vodafone Foundation in the development of the free mobile app Bright Sly RO, together with the Nervuviante Association and Code for Romania. The app provides specialised assistance and support to domestic violence victims or people concerned with the safety of a person they know or a family member. This instrument provides users with a support services database, relationship safety assessment questionnaires, it combats myths about domestic violence, presents the legal provisions in our country which protect victims, as well as the measures which could be adopted to increase online safety. The app also provides data and useful advice related to harassment in public/private areas and sexual harassment.

Good practice

The Project Children through Drawing and Colour about language rights of national minorities was carried out by the Department of Interethic Relations, Romanian Government, in collaboration with pupils in Târgu Mureș. The group of pupils created 20 paintings, one for each minority, to promote the minorities’ rights through drawings. The Project Sensitive Response to Domestic Violence Cases focused on trauma and trauma-centred approaches, in partnership with Sensibil Foundation and funded by the UK Embassy in Romania, offered professionals in the intervention fields of police, social security in Ițfăchi, Dej, Arad, Bistrița-Năsăud, Vaslui and Constanța Counties, knowledge and skills and attitudes that lead to a reduction of revictimisation and may create a favourable environment in which the survivors’ rights are observed and treated with dignity and respect.
Romaia’s goal
Progressively increase and diversify official development assistance provided, encourage Romanian economic agents to invest in the economy of developing countries, Romaia’s accession to the OECD.

Overview
Romaia’s objectives in the field of international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance are based on international commitments, such as eradication of extreme poverty, promotion of security, sustainable economic, social and environmental protection development. Romaia became a donor state of official development assistance in 2007, with the accession to the EU. The ODA net value granted by Romaia, as a share of Gross National Income, increased from 0.11% in 2016 to 0.15% in 2021.

In 2018, Romaia acquired the status of participant in the OECD Development Assistance Committee. It represents the main international donors of international cooperation for development, being also the body that sets the standards in the matter. Thus, Romaia’s contribution to the fulfillment of global objectives related to official development assistance is validated annually by the DAC.

The 2020-2023 strategic multiannual programme on international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance identifies and plans the general and specific international cooperation objectives for development and humanitarian aid on the short and medium term. Being established in 2016, the Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation, subordinated to the MFA, is responsible for the implementation of programmes and projects in the field of international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance.

Response to the war in Ukraine
In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which resulted in affecting the energy security of European countries, Romaia granted ODA to the Republic of Moldova, supplying more than 80% of the needed electricity, including the development of cross-border electricity transmission interconnections between the two states. In 2022, Romaia granted the Republic of Moldova two aid projects, in the form of direct budget support, in a total amount of €10.48 million.

In September 2022, Romaia initiated the Trilateral format Romania - Republic of Moldova - Ukraine, mainly dedicated to the energy security and cooperation in the field of energy. At the first reunion which took place in September, the focus was on energy security, with a focus on regional interconnection, taking into account the need to combat the use of energy for geopolitical purposes. Thus, a Trilateral intergovernmental agreement was concluded to boost energy interconnections and cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova.

Leave no one behind
Romaia supported the least developed countries, granting ODA amounts of €212,700 (€0.05 per capita) at the end of 2021. At the end of 2022, MFA and RoAid organised the 14th edition of the post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction course at Dakar, in Senegal. Through it, Romania has showcased its expertise and lessons learned from the many peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation operations it has participated in over the past two decades.

Through the 2022 Annual Plan for international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance, the Romanian government granted voluntary contributions of about €50,000 to UNHCR and UNICEF, to support the Ukrainian refugees.

Challenges
- The main challenge for ODA policy is represented by the many neighbouring and world crises it is necessary to adaptability and flexibility of Romania’s action as an ODA donor, especially with the crises that will continue to unfold in the coming years, including those generated by the war in Ukraine. The commitment increase of ODA volume may be affected by future pressures on the state budget, which shall also affect the citizens.
- Trade consolidation, through new partnerships and efficient transport infrastructure, in particular developing and encouraging international trade with developing countries, but also encouraging the private sector to invest in R&D, presents complex but not insurmountable challenges.
- Competitiveness of Romanian products on the external market may be improved by increasing the export of high-tech goods, as a measure of efficiency and integration of Romanian companies into the international value chains.

Next steps
To support the ODA policies, the 2024-2027 Multiannual strategic programme on international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance under development. It shall be able to foresee the necessary actions to ensure an efficient response to current challenges at international level - conflicts and security crises, combating the climate change effects, food security crisis.

Constant efforts shall be made to increase the total ODA volume up to 0.33% of GNI by 2030, according to the commitments assumed at the European level. At the same time, Romania shall act to comply with the EU’s estimate to reach 0.29% of GNI to the benefit of the least developed countries.

The increase in the volume of export and import transactions with the developing countries boosts their sustainable economic development and enhances their competitiveness on the world market, leading to mutual profitability in the context of globalisation. Value of exported goods directly contributes to the increase in productivity and economic growth on sustainable bases by incorporating innovation, as well as average and high technology. The higher the share of innovative companies with cooperation agreements concluded with partners outside the country, the greater the chance of achieving products at higher quality standards.

International partnerships
In September 2022, the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre E-ARC organized a comprehensive course on developing the resilience of Moldovan institutions, in the context of the strategic partnership for European integration of the Republic of Moldova. The training provided by E-ARC, in partnership with the Institute for European Policy and Reform, related to the general theory of resilience, societal resilience in relation to disinformation, and resilience in case of complex crises and emergencies. This way, Romaia and the Republic of Moldova agreed to develop their cooperation in the field of strengthening democratic resilience, for the benefit of regional resilience.

Within the Agreement between the Romanian Government and the Moldavian Government on the implementation of the technical and financial support programme based on a non-refundable financial aid of €50 million granted by Romania to the Republic of Moldova, signed in February 2022, projects shall be implemented in strategic fields, such as education and improvement of public utility services. Thus, through the 57 investment projects provided for in the “Centres of Village’ project, more than 15,000 people will have access to improved water and sewage services. At the same time, in order to ensure a qualitative educational process, 135 secondary education institutions shall be provided with laboratory equipment for the physics, chemistry and biology rooms. In addition, 125 minibuses and 14 school buses shall be purchased, specially equipped for the transport of disabled children.

Local community support
The Blue Dots are specially designed support centres for refugee children from Ukraine and their families. They provide services for urgent needs of children and women, in an integrated manner.

Blue Dot centres and support centres for children and women currently open in Iasi, Bihor, and Alba Iulia, in partnership with local communities to support the most vulnerable populations. Supported by UNICEF, they were created in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, through the National Authority for the Protection of Children’s Rights and Adoption, UNHCR and with the support of local authorities, county authorities and local NGOs. New Blue Dot centres are under installation.

Civil society action
The “Education at Height” programme, developed by Inserm Association in partnership with the Department for Sustainable Development, private companies and civil society organisations, reached in 2022 its fourth season of multidisciplinary lessons organised by using the drone, for schools in Romania, Republic of Moldova and other European states. More than 3500 schools took part in the most recent edition of the programme, of which about 250 in the Republic of Moldova, with an average of the number of pupils of 75/school.
Sociological research, carried out between June and August 2022, as part of the Project Sustainable Romania, measured public opinion on the net interest regarding the 99 National Statistical Indicators for Sustainable Development, through 6 opinion barometers that cross-secto­ rially addressed the 17 SDGs.

Net interest: the level of interest, which is the difference between positive responses: very interested and fairly interested, and negative responses: quite a little interested and very little interested.

Level of Interest

The average level of net interest was around 38%, and the themes of interest to the population were identified at the ends of the statistical distribution, namely those that stood out with the highest level of net interest, respectively the lowest level of net interest.

The main topics that showed high interest among the population and that were found in public, political and media debates are presented in Table 1.

The main topics with low interest among the population are abstract topics related to the economy and especially to econometrics: productivity, the share of economic fields in GDP, industry, tourism, research & development, exports, imports, SMEs, foreign direct investments, financial intermediation in the economy, Official Development Assistance, energy consumption in industry. Other topics of low interest are presented in Table 2.

Conclusions

As result of the application of opinion barometers regarding the 99 National Indicators for Sustainable Development associated with the 17 SDGs, it was found that the variation in the importance of the SDGs in public perception is smaller than the 99 indicators analyzed separately.

This situation was due to the fact that each individual SDG represents the average of several individual indicators, and the average values are less far from the neutral center than the multitude of indicators.

The areas related to poverty, SDG 1, quality of life, SDG 10 and forest protection, SDG 15 recorded the high interest.

Also, the domains related to the infrastructure of public supply networks, SDG 6, gender equality, SDG 5 and education, SDG 4 indicated a high interest.

From the other 11 SDGs, corresponding to the lack of interest, the areas of SDG 17, SDG ¾ and SDG 8 stood out, which include most of the econometric indicators.

Further popularization of the sustainable development goals and principles, through campaigns at the level of the whole society, will increase the level of interest in public perception towards the ROSDS 2030 and the 17 SDGs.

Subjective indicators of perception
SDGs net interest rate
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Table 1 High interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Protecting forests, +81%</th>
<th>Combating illegal logging, +79%</th>
<th>Climate change, +67%</th>
<th>Unprotected sewage and waste water, +65%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy and infrastructure</td>
<td>Inflation, +79%</td>
<td>Connection to the sewerage network, +71%</td>
<td>Connection to the drinking water network, +67%</td>
<td>Modernized public roads, +63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and quality of life</td>
<td>Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory diseases, +69%</td>
<td>Domestic violence against women, +68%</td>
<td>Violence that cause victims casualties, +60%</td>
<td>Road mortality, +67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Children’s participation in pre-university education, +71%</td>
<td>Feeding jobs for young people after education, +55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Low interest

| Socially sensitive aspects in public discourse | Alcohol consumption, -9% | Suicides, +3% | Births among underage mothers, +17% | Obesity, +1)% |
| Aquatic life                              | Natural aquatic areas/wetlands, +18% |
| Transport                                 | Passenger transport, +16% | Dangerous goods in freight transport, -16% |
| Agriculture                               | Agricultural cadastre, +6% | New varieties and hybrids of agricultural plants, -10% |
| Heterogeneous, punctual subjects          | Promotion of electric vehicles, +12% | Adult participation in continuing education, +17% | Education of minorities in the mother tongue, +8% |
WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

Two years after Romania expressed its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2017, the Department of Sustainable Development was created for transsectoral coordination at the highest level of the Government, under the direct coordination of the Prime Minister of Romania. At the midpoint for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, due to the actions carried out and coordinated by the Department of Sustainable Development, Romania now has a strategy and an action plan that holistically tackle the implementation of the 17 SDGs by 2030 and national indicators to monitor progress.

A governance framework for sustainable development was established, coordinated from the centre of the Government through a cross-sectoral approach, and recognised regionally and internationally as robust and innovative in support of increasing the effectiveness of public institutions to achieve the SDGs. A functional inter-institutional network ensures SDGs implementation at all levels and there are mechanisms and tools to streamline implementation through collaboration, partnerships, training and upskilling.

Further, the Department focused on developing mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, in particular on aligning policy planning and budgeting in support of the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

Mechanisms for monitoring implementation progress were also developed, databases, platforms, collaboration agreements whereby ministries, government agencies and other organisations commit to regularly providing high-quality data to strengthen the national data system for sustainable development. A paradox shift was also needed for the entire society, therefore Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy is citizen-oriented and recognises the importance of raising awareness and enhancing the active engagement of all relevant societal actors. Through awareness-raising campaigns and consultations, the Department of Sustainable Development initiated a movement to create a critical mass so that society becomes a partner in the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy’s implementation.

HOW WE PROGRESSED

Romania reports 62.1% progress made towards the implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, with different outcomes for each SDG:

- SDG 10 with 84.2% and SDG 13 with 81.3% are the most advanced
- SDG 4 with 44.3%, SDG 3 with 41.0% and SDG 9 with 37.0% have the lowest levels
- SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 show an upward trend
- SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12, SDG 16, SDG 17 show significant increase

The analysis of the 291 monitored indicators showed that:
- 91 indicators are on track
- 61 indicators show decreasing trends
- 78 indicators show a moderately increasing trend
- 62 indicators show a stagnating trend

These results indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic, recent international crises, rising cost of living and supply chain challenges have impacted the progress towards SDGs achievement.

HOW WE RANK WORLDWIDE

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network report for 2022 ranked Romania 31st out of 163 countries in the global SDG ranking, with a score of 77.7.

Romania recorded the following trends:
- SDG 1 and SDG 6, achievement
- SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 14, SDG 16 and SDG 17, moderate improvement
- SDG 7, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 15, stagnating
- SDG 4, decreasing

WHAT WE AIM FURTHER

Strengthen and extend the governance framework for sustainable development
- Localise SDGs, including building the one-stop-shop platform
- Strengthen and extension of the regulatory and inter-institutional cooperation framework by regulating the status of the Hubs for Sustainable Development
- Strengthen the policy coherence for sustainable development by Regulatory Impact Assessment Planning
- Education and training programme for 2000 experts of sustainable development by 2030, of which 1,600 for local authorities
- Develop the national budgetary planning framework to implement the Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy
- Set up the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration

Monitor and evaluate the implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy
- Monitor and evaluate the indicators for sustainable development
- Annual progress report to the Romanian Parliament
- Monitor legislation and policies on sustainable development
- Involve all segments of society in the implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy
- Promote sustainable development, especially among young people, in schools and universities. Introduce the concept of sustainable development in education
- Community-based campaigns to communicate and promote sustainable development concepts
- Support and incentivise businesses and civil society to implement the SDGs, including through the implementation of the Romanian Sustainability Code

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Romania is at a crucial milestone in fulfilment of the SDGs, having the chance to capitalise EU funding allocated in 2021 under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which entails access to €29.18 billion of NextGenerationEU funds. Over 47% of the funding proposed in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan is allocated to the green transition, with measures to phase out coal and lignite production by 2032. Green transition reforms also include actions to promote sustainable transport and decarbonise road transport, green taxation, improved energy efficiency in private and public buildings, incentives for zero emission vehicles and a modal shift to rail and water transport.

The European Semester, the European Union’s framework for the coordination of economic and social policies of the Member States provides a strong framework for effective coordination of economic and social policies in light of current challenges and for advancing the implementation of the SDGs.

Under the European Semester, EU Member States report on National Recovery and Resilience Plan implementation, which includes reforms and investments contributing to the green and digital transition, using the National Reform Programme as a tool. Starting from 2021, the National Reform Programme includes a chapter on country progress in implementing the SDGs. In order to track the contribution of reforms to the implementation of the SDGs, Romania successfully proposed in the National Reform Programme the correlation of reform priorities with the SDGs.

Reform priorities for SDGs

Romania: 100% correlation of reform priorities with the SDGs.

MAIN CHALLENGES

OECD experts identified potential bottlenecks in the effective and coherent implementation of the National Action Plan of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy. In 2022.

Challenge 1

Limited use of governance tools for SDGs policy integration

Romania has put in place an ambitious institutional framework for policy coherence for sustainable development, which contributes to the coordination and implementation of the National Action Plan. The benefits of this framework could be further leveraged through a more systematic use of governance tools, more specifically Institutional Strategic Planning, budgeting and regulatory impact assessment.

The Department of Sustainable Development could request ministries to explain how their budget contributes to implementing the SDGs in their policy declarations. Ideally, this information could be summarized in an SDGs Budget Statement accompanying the draft budget. 

OECD Recommendation, 2022

The Budget Statement may serve as a reporting tool that provides greater transparency on government actions.

Challenge 2

Large disparities in localising SDGs and few mechanisms for vertical coherence

The competencies and resources of cities and regions also depend on countries’ degree of decentralization. In Romania, coordination between national and local-level actions for sustainable development is not yet systematized. The challenges to support local authorities in incorporating the principles and values of the concept of sustainable development into local policies and strategies lies primarily in limited human resources and limited technical expertise.

A virtual ‘one-stop-shop’ platform is under construction, and is expected to contribute to strengthened SDGs implementation at the local level. This interactive platform will link the data collected at the national level by the National Institute of Statistics and the government databases with data on the SDGs indicators at local level. A territorial approach to the SDGs means mapping and analysing the main economic, social and environmental trends in SDGs implementation, in terms of evolution over time in the same region, and also in terms of comparisons between counties and regions. The platform will map and highlight examples of good practice, organisational projects and managerial capabilities that create and support such projects. It will be a place of knowledge resources, learning promotion and dialogue for sustainable development. The platform could also support the comparison and alignment of laws related to sustainable development across regions, and vertical coherence and coordination. Training of local-level civil servants, including establishment of the Hubs for Sustainable Development in local authorities offer additional opportunities for strengthened vertical coherence. If Romania puts in place SDGs budgeting at central level, this could inspire local authorities to align their own expenditures and revenues with SDGs.

Limited correlation and monitoring of Romania’s many sectoral policies to inform the sustainable development strategy implementation

Challenges are linked to the multitude of data sources and limited human resources and statistical expertise in line ministries, which indicates a strong need for further training and guidance. There also appears to not be enough clarity on the roles and responsibilities involved.

In terms of correlation between sectoral policies and Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, the National Action Plan assigns the Department of Sustainable Development with the responsibility to develop guidance and recommendations for line ministries to integrate sustainable development into strategic documents at central level in their respective areas. This guidance should include strong elements of cross-coordination and correlation between sectoral policies and how these – individually and collectively – contribute to the implementation of the National Action Plan.

In terms of monitoring, the National Action Plan will be accompanied by a monitoring framework, which provides an opportunity for streamlining and using various data sources on sustainable development in policy making. The ongoing training of “experts of sustainable development”, the new Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development and the One-Stop-Shop platform will help to strengthen the capacity of civil servants to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development and implement the SDGs. The Department is also expected to develop, with OECD support, a guide for ministries to ensure effective and coherent National Action Plan implementation.

Challenge 3

Cross-cutting challenges for the specific objectives of the National Action Plan

Limited human resources.

Limited technical expertise/capacity

Limited funding

NEXT STEPS

Strengthening commitment, vision and leadership for policy coherence for sustainable development

- Ensure adequate financial and human resources across the Government, through Government Decisions, if necessary, to support the commitments made in the National Action Plan
- Establish mandatory procedures that systematically involve the Department of Sustainable Development in the implementation of the new Government Decisions linked to planning, budgeting and regulatory impact assessment
- Encourage all ministries to use the option to introduce, for each new Institutional Strategic Plan, policy coherence for sustainable development-specific information on projects and activities that foster sustainable development
- The Department of Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Finance could work together to mainstream the SDGs perspective in the methodology for the preparation and implementation of budgetary programmes
- SDGs tagging exercise to provide a mapping of how public spending contributes to the SDGs and to the 2030 targets

Strengthening institutional and governance mechanisms to address policy interactions

- Organize at least two annual meetings of the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development
- Develop a “job description” for the professionals of the Hubs for Sustainable Development so that they know what is expected from them with a view to coordinate actions and policies in their ministry with those of other ministries
- Use Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy as a framework for aligning policy priorities, incentives, and objectives across national, regional and local public authorities
- Assign a staff member in the Department of Sustainable Development to actively monitor and advance progress on vertical policy coherence for sustainable development throughout Romania

Romania still faces many challenges before achieving the 2030 targets. Since 2017, programmatic documents have been adopted to guide sustainable development in Romania; governance framework to reach SDGs and implementation tools have been developed, but the mid-term review reveals that there is still much to be done. In addition to the institutional dimension, Romania needs to develop a critical mass of people to change mindsets and act in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development principles.

- Systematically involve local-level authorities in the Regulatory Impact Assessment cost-benefit analysis
- Provide training to local civil servants and establish Hubs for Sustainable Development in local and regional authorities
- Making better use of tools to anticipate, assess and address impacts of policies on sustainable development
- Elevate the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development to a Parliamentary Committee to strengthen its convening power and impact
- Embed a dimension of policy coherence for sustainable development or a dedicated chapter on it in the Annual Report to the Parliament on the implementation of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy
- Continue to strengthen the capacities of the Romanian Court of Accounts to undertake SDGs-related performance audits
- As part of the new procedures for conducting the Regulatory Impact Assessment, the Department of Sustainable Development has to valorize the mandate to review new strategies to check the quality of the responsible ministries’ assessments of regulatory impacts on the SDGs, and to see if and how the initiator involved local stakeholders in the process
- Link sectoral strategies and policy outcomes with the National Indicators for Sustainable Development
- Finalise and implement across the Government the new Institutional Strategic Plans dashboard, with information and periodic reporting data on strategic objectives, programmes, budgetary measures and indicators corresponding to the planning levels
We thank all the structures included in the governance framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy, respectively ministries, central and local public authorities of the Government of Romania, organizations from the academic sector, research and development, from the private and non-governmental sector, civil society, who participated and supported the process of making the Voluntary National Review, as follows:


Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development, Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Developments, Network of Hubs for Sustainable Developments, National Institute of Statistics, Romanian Court of Account

Local public administration authorities, Romanian Municipalities Association (AMR), Romanian Towns Association (ADIR) and the Association of Communes of Romania (ACIR), National Federation of Local Rural Action Groups (FNGAL Rural), National Federation of Local Rural Action Groups (FNGAL Rural), National Union of County Councils from Romania (UNCIR)

Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, Council of National Research and Development Institutes in Romania, UNICEF Romania, Foreign Investors Council, Habitat, Go

Food Banks Federation, Social Innovation Solutions, Top Minds & Partners: Aquilla, Autonom. Group Metro, BRD, Vintello, Romanian Coalition Sustainable Romania, Sustainability Embassy in Romania

We acknowledge the following institutions and organizations for their support:

AURICA Claudia, BĂILEȘTEANU Liviu, BÂIA Georgiana, BALOGA Daniela, BĂZĂ Avram, BÂSCU Dragos, BÂLMAN Madalina, BĂLĂLĂU Ileana, BĂLESCU Cornelia, BĂLAN Andrei, BĂLĂINEA Elena, BĂNEA Ioan, BĂINEA Ioan, BĂLĂU Ileana, BĂLMĂnescu Silviu

and many others.