

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are not doing enough. Looking at the available data and concrete actions adopted in the last three years, it is clear that the world, Europe and Italy will hardly honour the commitments undertaken before the UN with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development on September 25th, 2015. Notwithstanding the improvement registered in various global economic and social indicators and the measures adopted by many countries, businesses and cities, the world has not yet shown the “cultural discontinuity” and the strategic decision-making approach necessary to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) all global leaders agreed to. And not just because we are only twelve years away from 2030. In fact, beside significant advancements related to investments in renewable energy or the fight against the widespread use of plastic, for instance, we are witnessing worrying trend reversals on issues such as food security and hunger, inequalities, ecosystem quality, climate-induced damage and increasing migration flows following conflicts or extreme weather events.

Europe is not doing enough. Although the European Union is by far the most advanced area of the world in terms of socio-economic and environmental wellbeing, the area with the most stringent environmental and labour protection regulation, and where the rule of law is most secured, a quarter of its population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion, inequalities do not appear to be declining and unemployment and underemployment are very consistent, especially in certain countries. As depicted by the composite indicators elaborated by ASviS, progress towards the SDGs is too slow and in few cases lacking. On the other hand, European institutions have not yet defined how they intend to adopt the 2030 Agenda as a framework for all policies, a key issue on which, despite the many objections and oppositions, the European Commission should present a proposal by the end of the year.

Italy is not doing enough. Political shortcomings are particularly evident, despite the significant mobilisation of the business world, cultural and educational institutions and civil society. The indicators elaborated by ASviS, both at national level and (for the first time) at the level of Italian regions, confirm the country’s unsustainable condition from economic, social, environmental and institutional points of view. Even where significant progress has been achieved, Italy is still very far from reaching the Goals and in some cases the observed trends go in the wrong direction. Adding to all this, the country is characterised by large inequalities in terms of gender, social groups and territories. In particular, according to the latest available data, Italy shows signs of improvement in eight areas: nutrition and sustainable agriculture, health, education, gender equality, innovation, sustainable production and consumption models, fight against climate change, and international cooperation. The situation significantly worsens in relation to: poverty, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, and life on land. No significant changes characterize the Goals on clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, life below water, and peace, justice and strong institutions.

The good news is that the Italian society looks increasingly interested in sustainable development, as demonstrated by the stances taken by many relevant economic and social actors, the development of educational programmes in schools and universities, and the number of initiatives aimed at engaging businesses, local communities and individuals on the topics of the 2030 Agenda. Along all of the initiatives undertaken by ASviS, the 2018 edition of the Sustainable Development Festival, with over 700 events organized across Italy from May 22nd to June 7th, was an enormous success that significantly contributed to promoting this change.

The array of policies adopted in Italy in the last twelve months displays significant elements of advancement, such as the introduction of a minimum income scheme (*Reddito di Inclusione*) to reduce poverty, as well as delays and missed opportunities, like in the case of the failed approval, within the past legislature, of the measures on the reduction of land use, the right to water and fair trade, or the failure to enact implementation measures for important laws such as those concerning the Third sector reform and sustainable finance. What still seems to be missing is an integrated policy vision to build an equitable and sustainable future for Italy. The electoral campaign and the political confrontation that led

to the establishment of the new Government did not revolve around clear programmes explicitly oriented towards sustainable development.

While ASviS's efforts to engage political parties on the 2030 Agenda, both before and following the electoral confrontation, fostered the adoption of commitments and a growing attention to these issues, no concrete actions were undertaken to allow Italy to catch up with the best international practices in terms of governance of this process. Therefore, from a systemic point of view, ASviS remarks the urgent need to address the following issues:

- Initiate the parliamentary debate on the introduction of the concept of sustainable development among the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution.
- Implement the Directive signed by the President of the Council of Ministers on March 16th, 2018, and constitute the “National commission for sustainable development” within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.
- Present, along with the next Budget Law, a report on its expected impact on the 12 Equitable and sustainable wellbeing indicators (*BES - Benessere Equo e Sostenibile*), that have recently been introduced into the public budget planning cycle.
- Transform the “Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Programming” (CIPE) into “Inter-ministerial committee for sustainable development”, to orient public investments to sustainable development.
- Adopt an SDG-based national urban Agenda that can represent the urban ramification of the National Sustainable Development Strategy.
- Establish, within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, a permanent body in charge of designing gender equality policies together with the civil society.
- Define “guidelines” to manage public administrations in line with environmental, social and organizational standards aimed at achieving the SDGs.
- Intervene, through the Budget Law or other normative instruments, to ensure the achievement of the 22 Targets the 2030 Agenda sets for 2020.
- Extend non-financial reporting obligations to medium-sized enterprises to allow them to access the growing flow of investments activated in the context of sustainable finance.

As in the previous editions of this Report, the last chapter illustrates the policies to be undertaken, according to a modern and integrated vision of sustainable development, in relation to seven areas: climate change and energy; poverty and inequalities; circular economy, innovation and labour; human capital, health and education; natural capital and environment quality; cities, infrastructures and social capital; international cooperation. The actions suggested represent concrete proposals, some of which (land use, right to water, ecosystem protection, etc.) draw on the work carried out by the previous Parliament and are therefore attainable in the near future.

The time factor is crucial, as is the cultural choice to pursue sustainable development, a choice that politics should propose to the country beyond divergent opinions on specific issues. Such a choice would drive investments and consumption behaviours, crucial elements at the basis of production and consumption models, with positive economic, social and environmental spillovers.

ASviS will continue contributing to the transformation of our country and the European Union, strengthening its efforts in favour of sustainable development and its collaboration with other Italian and European civil society actors. The diffusion of regional and city-level indicators represents an important contribution to engage the local levels of government into adopting strategies and concrete actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Alliance, with its capillary network of members and associates, puts its services at the disposal of local administrations to support their coordinated efforts for an efficient pursuit of sustainable development.

You can download the Italian version of the Report and other documents from:

<http://asvis.it/rapporto-asvis-2018/>