

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Cyprus' national voluntary review on implementation of Agenda2030 offers an overview of progress so far, in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Cyprus. It outlines the main priorities and planning in a process of incorporation of the SDGs in national policies and the activities of government and non-government sectors towards this direction, as well as Cyprus' international activity towards promotion of priority SDGs. It also describes the efforts towards generating institutional and civil society ownership of the effort to implement Agenda 2030.

The review presents the results of a preliminary analysis and mapping exercise on Cyprus' current progress, identifies challenges and outlines next steps. It describes the institutional framework set up to work on this mapping and illustrates the present situation for each of the SDGs, highlighting progress already made, related government or EU policies and challenges faced. A statistical annex is also included.

The compilation of the review was coordinated by the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is to be presented to the Council of Ministers for information and formal approval.

Institutional mechanism

Cyprus' institutional mechanism for the implementation of Agenda 2030 is comprised mainly of Ministries and other governmental services, such as the Statistical Service, under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A relevant line Ministry has been assigned as coordinator for each one of the 17 Goals. A mapping exercise was initiated at the end of 2016, aiming to define stakeholders, national or EU strategies and indicators, if applicable, for each of the targets. Meanwhile, the Cypriot Statistical Service gathered all indicators available. Priorities were set based on the government priorities as well as on horizontal focal areas, such as youth.

Upon the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a process has been launched for indicating the most appropriate coordinator for SDGs implementation at domestic policy level. Due to institutional transformations occurring in the past year, under the restructuring of the public service and the possible creation of State Ministries -still under discussion in the House of Representatives- the coordination of both the domestic and the foreign policy aspects of the SDGs, as well as communicating and coordinating with the civil society, remained under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation, where relevant, with line Ministries.

Integration of sustainable development issues and the three dimensions in the national framework: The Republic of Cyprus' sustainable development policy

Cyprus faced a deep, unprecedented economic crisis that reached its peak in 2013. It was, therefore, essential to focus on short-run difficulties of the various affected groups and measures to address them, which led to an inevitable focus on the economic and social dimensions of policies. Legislation or other policies already exist for most SDGs and targets, through national and European strategies. Moreover, the structural and institutional reforms promoted, especially in the public sector, the health system and other sectors, aspire to lead breakthrough systemic transformations, aiming at creating employment and enhanced governance, transparency, competitiveness, as well as more efficient service provision to citizens, including with the further development of e-government.

The mapping exercise indicated the absence of a horizontal strategy covering all three dimensions of sustainable development. In its place, strategic programming, albeit short to medium-term one, and other actions, cover most, if not all, of the SDGs. The review outlines the Republic of Cyprus' priorities (mainly SDGs 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, as well as SDGs 4 and 14) and the policies involved in achieving them. Cyprus' international activity in promoting SDG implementation is also described.

Enabling environment

Following an extensive promotion, during 2015, of the various dimensions of sustainable development to the Cypriot public, an effort undertaken in the framework of the European Year for Development by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Cypriot NGOs, the Cypriot civil society carried out numerous projects, promoting all or specific SDGs. Engagement with the private sector is mainly undertaken by the Directorate General for European Programs, Coordination and Development, in the context of promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility and in cooperation with many other stakeholders. The House of Representatives' Committee for the Environment has initiated parliamentary discussions on Agenda 2030, by requesting an informative session with the SDGs Coordinator (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) on Cyprus' progress in SDGs achievement. More activity is expected to follow in all areas of cooperation, including towards engagement of the local authorities in the process of Agenda 2030 implementation.

Status of implementation of the SDGs in Cyprus: progress and challenges

Progress is observed in all the SDGs, while planning is already in place for most of them, especially the priority ones, through all the line policies. The Republic of Cyprus takes pride in its success in achieving a number of targets at a 100% level, many of them in the framework of SDG 3. Best practices include the provision of free and easily accessible education to everyone at all education levels, without discrimination, addressing the challenge of Cyprus' limited water resources and supplying excellent quality of drinking water to consumers, as well as the efforts made towards combating human trafficking, by effectively enforcing new legislation and expanding the role and competences of the Police Anti-Trafficking Bureau. On the international sphere, Cyprus actively promotes international cooperation on issues such as the protection of cultural property and regional cooperation for the protection from marine pollution. Concerning progress foreseen, there has been an upward trend in the use of renewable sources of energy, while steps are being taken towards a more sustainable tourism product.

Being at the initial stages of implementation of Agenda 2030, it is obvious that there is more work to be done to fully achieve the SDGs. Main challenges for Cyprus include, among others, addressing a high public debt and a relatively high unemployment rate after the economic crisis, the low contribution of the agricultural sector in the GDP, energy dependency on imported sources, under-representation of women in political and public life, the need for a sustainable consumption policy, a high percentage of non-attainment in mathematics, science and reading and the need to increase Official Development Assistance to reach the desired level.

Next steps

The process for Cyprus has been initiated with the mapping exercise and the preparation of the current review. Next steps include the assignment of a coordinator for the implementation of Agenda 2030 at domestic level, with the competency to overview future strategies and effectively incorporate the SDGs. Remaining indicators will be selected in collaboration with the Statistical Service, and benchmarks and targets will be set by the competent authorities. In the meantime, Cyprus will continue to participate in defining and implementing the future EU 2030 agenda as well as in relevant international events.

In the framework of reinforcing activity and cooperation between all stakeholders and as follow up to the online survey organized by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education and Culture on SDGs priorities, an extensive public information campaign will commence. More involvement of the House of Representatives is also expected in 2017. Engagement of local authorities is also considered a necessary step towards creating ownership and involvement of the totality of the Cypriot society.