

PRESS RELEASE

ASviS: the EU makes progress on the 2030 Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but critical issues and inequalities among Member States endure

The Director of ASviS, Enrico Giovannini: "The composite indices released by ASviS show the EU's positive trend towards the Goals, but there is still a long way to go, especially to reduce inequalities among Member States. The data presented today should guide European institutions in designing the priorities of political action for the period 2019-2024 so as to ensure sustainability in the EU"

Rome, May 21st, 2019 – The EU is the geopolitical area with the best quality of life in the world, yet a lot still needs to be done to ensure sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as to reduce inequalities among its countries. This is the situation depicted by the composite indices presented today by the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) during the opening conference of the Italian Sustainable Development Festival "*Make Europe the world champion of sustainable development*", which sees the participation of the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, the Governor of the Bank of Italy Ignazio Visco and many other national and international experts.

The analysis carried out by ASviS, updated to 2017, traces the European Union and its 28 Member States' evolution with respect to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals envisaged by the 2030 Agenda, adopted on September 25th 2015 by the 193 countries of the United Nations, including Italy. In particular, 16 composite indices were calculated for the period 2010-2017, synthesizing 77 indicators selected from the Eurostat database¹. The indices presented here² offer a unique representation of the evolution of the economic, social, environmental and institutional conditions of the EU, in line with the European Commission's *Reflection paper* published on January 30th ³ and the conclusions of the European Council of April 9th ⁴, which refer to the 2030 Agenda as the basis for European policies for the period 2019-2024.

"The results are uneven and this should make European leaders think", declares ASviS Director, Enrico Giovannini. "If the EU saw progress between 2010 and 2017 in many areas, issues such as inequalities and climate change, innovation and decent work demand urgent and stronger action. Moreover – adds Giovannini – the differences among Member States appear significant. This not only explains the varying perceptions on the state of Europe in national public opinions, but also puts European political cohesion at risk. This evidence represents a necessary reference for those who will guide European institutions following the elections, as it highlights the areas that require immediate action to achieve economic, social, environmental and institutional sustainability in the European Union".

The study reveals that, **between 2016 and 2017**, the EU situation improves relatively to Goal 1 (*No poverty*), 2 (*Zero hunger*), 3 (*Good health and well-being*), 4 (*Quality education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent work and economic growth*), 10 (*Reduced inequalities*), 11 (*Sustainable cities and communities*), 14 (*Life below water*) and 16 (*Peace, justice and strong institutions*). The situation is stable for Goal 7 (*Affordable and clean energy*), 9 (*Industry, innovation and infrastructure*), 12 (*Responsible consumption and production*), 13 (*Climate action*), 15 (*Life on land*) and 17 (*Partnerships for the Goals*).

¹ See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/main-tables>. Given the limited number of indicators available for Goal 6, it was not possible to calculate the composite index on water.

² The update of the European indices follows the release of national (February 27th, 2019) and regional indices (May 10th, 2019).

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/rp_sustainable_europe_30-01_en_web.pdf.

⁴ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8286-2019-INIT/en/pdf>.

The methodology used to calculate the [composite indices](#)⁵ is based on the choice of a benchmark value – that of the EU in 2010 – and on a standardization of the indicators in an interval defined by the minimum and maximum values of each indicator for all the units considered and for the entire time interval. All composite indices have been calculated by setting the value of the EU in 2010 to 100.

In the [graphs attached](#)⁶, for each Goal the bars represent the 2017 value of the composite index for the EU and single countries, whereas the grey circle indicates the corresponding value in 2010. With reference to 2017, **in nine cases Italy achieves worse results compared to EU average** (poverty, education, decent work, innovation, inequalities, cities, life below water, governance and partnerships), **in one case Italy's results are close to EU average** (gender equality), and **in six cases Italy is in a better condition than the EU** (zero hunger, health, energy, responsible consumption and production, climate action and life on land).

Main results

Goal 1 – No poverty

The composite index shows deterioration from 2010 to 2014, due to the worsening of all indicators taken into consideration. From 2015 to 2017, the index registers a strong improvement, overtaking, in the last year for which data is available, the level observed in 2010. This positive trend is due to the decrease in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and in those who are severely materially deprived. In particular, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion declines until reaching 22.4% of the total population in 2017, against a target of 19% to be reached by 2020 according to the “Europe 2020” Strategy.

Goal 2 – Zero hunger

The composite index displays stability until 2014, year after which it improves due to the increase in the agricultural factor income per annual work unit and areas under organic farming, both of which reach their maximum value in 2017. However, between 2010 and 2016 there is a significant increase in ammonia emissions from agriculture, which is an indicator measuring the negative impact of agriculture on climate change.

Goal 3 – Good health and well-being

The composite index consistently improves from 2010 to 2017. This positive trend, particularly evident in the last two years, can be explained by the increase in life expectancy at birth (albeit dropping between 2016 and 2017) as well as by the sharp decrease in the death rate due to chronic diseases and in the share of people reporting unmet need for medical examination and care.

Goal 4 – Quality education

The composite index shows a significant increase in the period considered thanks to the improvement of all the dimensions taken into consideration. In particular, the share of people who have successfully completed tertiary studies reaches 39.9% in 2017, in line with the 40% target set by “Europe 2020”. Also the indicator relative to early leave from education and training shows significant improvement, reaching 10.6% in 2017 compared to the 10% target of “Europe 2020”.

Goal 5 – Gender equality

From 2010 to 2017 the composite index displays significant improvement due to the progress of all variables taken into consideration. For what concerns women’s participation in politics, the proportion of women in national parliaments went from 23.6% of 2010 to 29.8% in 2017. Also the share of female

⁵ For further information on the methodology, see Mazziotto M. and Pareto A., “On a Generalized Non-compensatory Composite Indicator for Measuring Socio-economic Phenomena”, *Social Indicators Research*, 127, 3: 983-1003. 2016). EU-level and single Member State indicators and indices are available at: <http://asvis.it/il-monitoraggio-degli-sdgs-a-livello-europeo/>.

⁶ <http://asvis.it/il-monitoraggio-degli-sdgs-a-livello-europeo/>.

board members in the largest publicly listed companies grows continuously, going from 11.9% to 25.3%. The indicators relative to the gender pay and employment gap also slightly improve.

Goal 7 – Affordable and clean energy

The composite index shows a constant rise from 2010 to 2014 thanks to the increase in the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption and of energy productivity. Following that, parallel to economic recovery, the composite index displays a slight worsening due to the increase in primary and final electrical energy consumption. In 2017 the share of renewable energy reaches 17.5%, compared to the 20% target set by “Europe 2020”.

Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth

In the first three years observed, corresponding to the economic crisis period, the composite index shows a slight worsening caused by the increase in the long-term unemployment rate and the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training. From 2014 to 2017 the composite index improves consistently, ultimately reaching a level well above that registered at the beginning of the ten-year period. This is due to an improvement in all the dimensions taken into consideration: in particular, the employment rate goes from 68.5% in 2010 to 72.2% in 2017, however still far from the 75% target of “Europe 2020”.

Goal 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure

From 2010 to 2017 the composite index shows a slight improvement. In particular, the indicators measuring the share of R&D personnel and the gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a percentage of the GDP increase, with the latter equalling 2.1% in 2017, far less than the 3% target set by “Europe 2020”. It is important to underline how the last three years have seen a worsening of the indicators relative to transport, namely the share of busses and trains in total passenger transport and the share of rail and inland waterways in total inland freight transport.

Goal 10 – Reduced inequalities

In the first four years taken into consideration, the composite index displays a slight worsening due to the increase in the inequality of income distribution. From 2015 to 2017 the composite index improves, ultimately reaching a level well above that registered in 2010 thanks to the increase in GDP per capita and in the adjusted gross disposable income of households.

Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities

The composite index shows a strong improvement from 2010 to 2017. This positive trend is due to the progress of all indicators taken into account. In particular, the recycling rate of municipal waste increases from 38% of 2010 to 46% in 2017, while both the number of people killed in road accidents and the share of population exposed to air pollution by particulate matter (PM 10) improve.

Goal 12 – Responsible consumption and production

The composite index shows an increase due to the improvement of all indicators analysed until 2016, whereas the year 2017 displays a static situation. In the period considered, the indicators relative to resource “productivity” and “circularity” improve, while the average CO₂ emissions per km from new passenger cars decrease. However, total waste generation increases between 2010 and 2017.

Goal 13 – Climate action

The composite index shows a positive trend, notwithstanding the stability of the last year, due to the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and in greenhouse gas emissions intensity of energy consumption. Per capita greenhouse gas emissions amount to 8.7 tons in the last year for which data is available, a better value than the 9.6 target set by “Europe 2020”.

Goal 14 – Life below water

With regard to SDG 14, it is important to underline how the lack of data relative to the quality of marine ecosystems, both at national and European level, only allows for a partial analysis of the phenomenon. The composite index shows a strong improvement from 2010 to 2017 thanks to the increase in the surface of marine sites designated under the network “Natura 2000” and the share of bathing sites with excellent water quality by locality.

Goal 15 – Life on land

Also in this case the available indicators appear inadequate to accurately measure the condition of terrestrial ecosystems. The composite index shows a strong worsening due to the increase in artificial land cover. On the other hand, the indicators relative to the share of forest area and the surface of terrestrial sites designated under “Natura 2000” display a slight improvement.

Goal 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

The composite index shows a strong worsening from 2010 to 2015 due to the decline of confidence among EU citizens in a selection of EU institutions (the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank). These indicators improve in the last two years observed, ultimately bringing the composite index back to the values observed in 2010. The death rate due to homicide and the share of population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area both decrease throughout the period observed.

Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

The composite index shows an overall worsening due to the decrease in Official development assistance as share of national income and in imports from developing countries, phenomena which have been accompanied by an increase in general government gross debt.

**Composite indices for the Sustainable Development Goals relative to the European Union
(2010=100)**



