

# Italy and the Sustainable Development Goals

Rapporto ASviS 2016

## Executive Summary (in English)

On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, accompanied by a list of 17 objectives and 169 targets (Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs) covering all domains of human life and the planet, and which will have to be achieved by all countries of the world by 2030. Moreover, with the adoption of the Agenda 2030, whose progress will be monitored by the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the United Nations, not only there has been a clear statement on the unsustainability of the current development model, but there has been an evolution that has seen sustainability grows beyond the confines of the mere environmental issue, favoring an integrated vision of the different dimensions of development. All countries, all sectors (governments, companies, civil society) and all people are called to contribute in the effort to bring the world on a path of sustainability: because of this, the Agenda 2030 requires to draw decision-making and implementation processes that are open and inclusive.

After one year, this Report analyzes the situation in Italy with respect to the wide range of economic, social, environmental and institutional objectives contained in the Agenda 2030, and puts forward numerous proposals to place this commitment at the center of the debate for the entire country, and to contribute to the predisposition of the Italian Strategy for sustainable development on which the government is working.

If redirecting the management of our world towards sustainability is a momentous and unprecedented challenge, the new Strategy will have to be the framework for building the Italy of the future, capable of ensuring that the SDGs and its targets become a binding, multi-year and persistent commitment for all economic and social players, kept in check in real time using appropriate, detailed and timely statistical indicators. The times are tight: one year of the 15 set out for achieving the objectives of Agenda 2030 has already gone by. It is necessary to pick up the pace and take important decisions immediately. As a result, ASviS proposes to the Government to: speed up the work finalized for the definition of the Strategy; communicate to the Secretariat of the United Nations as soon as possible the

intention to present the Italian Strategy at the High Level Political Forum of 2017; add in the next Budget Law interventions capable of starting immediately positive changes for the aspects on which our Country is most behind, creating a "Fund for Sustainable Development", with which to finance specific actions that will be included in the Strategy.

Incidentally, the Strategy has to face two difficult challenges: the definition of an appropriate legal framework with an effective governance model for sustainable development policies, and the choice between different policies. The same applies to the European Union, in which Italy can and must play an important role (also in view of the G7 presidency for 2017). If sustainable development is to be the cardinal paradigm for Italy, we believe necessary to include said principles in the Constitution, operating on articles 2, 3 and 9. Furthermore, notwithstanding the responsibilities attributed by law 221/2015 to the Minister of the Environment for the preparation of the Strategy for sustainable development (which we suggest to be formally approved by the Council of Ministers), the complexity and the multi-year implications of the political decisions necessary to achieve the SDGs place the political body at the head of the implementation of the Agenda 2030, given its responsibilities and duties as coordinator of government action, as it already occurs in all those European countries that have already submitted their strategies.

In view of the strategic role that public and private investments have in building a sustainable future, and of the new way that the concept of economic policy is defined, we propose to rename the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning, chaired by the Prime Minister, in the "Inter-ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development" and review its composition in the light of the responsibilities of individual ministries for the implementation of Agenda 2030. On the other hand, since the latter does not call into question only political institutions, but requires the involvement of stakeholders in the decision making and leads them to assume directly useful initiatives for achieving the SDGs, we propose the creation of an Advisory Committee on the Agenda 2030 and for sustainable development policies, involving experts in the subjects relevant to the SDGs and representatives of the social parties and the larger civil society. Moreover, the Government should prepare an annual "Report on Sustainable Development in Italy" which evaluates the path of our country towards the SDGs.

We then suggest that the Parliament, which is responsible for a central role in the process which will lead Italy on the path of sustainability, pays attention to the Agenda 2030 in a systematic manner, also taking into account the evaluation function of public policies vested in the Senate by the constitutional law which will be submitted to a referendum in the autumn. Moreover, given that some of the most relevant matters for the Agenda 2030 are the responsibility of several inter-ministerial committees, we recommend conducting a detailed analysis of the current distribution of responsibilities among them, while the Joint Conference should

conduct a similar analysis aimed at identifying the responsibilities of the different levels of government, and then define the most appropriate actions in order to ensure alignment between national and regional policies.

We consider essential the design and implementation of a widespread and long-lasting information campaign on sustainable development's issues, which will distribute everywhere and easily the contents of the abovementioned Annual Report. The launch of a national program of education for sustainable development, finalized to form new generations, is also deemed necessary.

Furthermore, since after one year from the signing of the Agenda 2030 the country still does not have an "official" database with the existing indicators for Italy among the 230 selected by the United Nations, we reiterate the request to the National Institute of Statistics to produce as soon as possible said tool, with data referring not only to the national averages, but also to the territories (especially the cities), the relevant socio-economic groups and to sex. We urge the Government to ensure that the national statistical system has the human and material resources to process all the indicators defined by the United Nations, ensuring their timeliness and detail, so as to maximize the benefit to all of society.

On the political front, the Report advances numerous proposals useful for the design of the strategy in a "systemic" approach, structured around seven themes: climate change and energy; poverty and inequality; circular economy, innovation and jobs; human capital, health and education; natural capital and environmental quality; cities, infrastructure and social capital; international cooperation. Many recommendations concern the urgent ratification of relevant international conventions and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement on the fight against climate change, and especially the implementation of existing regulations, which would ensure the achievement of many SDGs. New medium-term strategies should be developed in specific areas or on cross-sector issues: for example, there is a proposal for the development of a strategy for urban areas, in analogy to what has already been done for the inner areas, supported by multi-year investments oriented at the mitigation of risks arising from climate change, from the hydrogeological erosion and from natural hazards, such as earthquakes. Such an approach, combined with development-oriented policies on the so-called "circular economy", also extended to social aspects, would be able not only to reduce the impact of human activities on the environment, and thus to improve the living conditions of people, but also to offer new opportunities for economic development and employment. The theme of economic, social, gender, generational and territorial inequalities must be at the heart of all the political debates, or it will pay for it with the unsustainability of development and of institutional settings: on this issue some specific proposals are put forward, to be read together with those concerning education and cultural development, key elements for supporting and strengthening the social capital. Last, but by no means least, in terms of international cooperation it is necessary to

highlight the need to fully implement the measures undertaken in recent years, using the conceptual framework of sustainable development as the direction of the interventions to be carried out in third countries.

This Report is an opportunity for reflection that the ASviS proposes to the entire country, for the sustainable development of which it will continue to work, with a spirit of service and full availability on the debate on all the issues on which depends the future, not only of Italy, but of the present and future generations.

| *28 September 2016*

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