

## Executive summary

Last year we opened the Report stating “we are not doing enough”, to express our disappointment for the way in which Italy and the European Union were implementing the 2030 Agenda, amid delays and the lack of a coherent vision. Today we notice the positive signals, however limited for now to announcements that have recently emerged from the approach adopted by the new European Commission and the new Government in Italy. We can also notice the change that is occurring in the business world and in international public opinion, concerning the need for a different development model, a change aided by the mobilization of millions of young people that have drawn everyone’s attention to the climate emergency.

On the other hand, we know that the world is not on a sustainable development path. Environmental degradation endures and global warming is accelerating, with devastating effects on ecosystems and on the lives of millions, especially the most vulnerable. Concerns for a new economic crisis are multiplying, trade and political tensions are growing, and nationalistic and protectionist solutions to national and global problems are increasingly common. Inequalities remain extremely high and persistent.

These contradictions have surfaced in the previous weeks, on the occasion of the United Nations’ General Assembly dedicated to the 2030 Agenda, four years after its ratification. Many countries announced concrete measures to contribute to bringing the world on a sustainable development path; large companies and financial institutions undertook new commitments to change their business models and to contribute to the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); demonstrators across the world demanded a drastic change in economic, social and environmental policies. However, all of this does not appear to be adequate to the challenge we face and is in contrast with the behaviour of individuals and of institutions; many political leaders appear unable to convince their public opinions that changes are necessary, and many governments and companies are still dominated by a short-term view, at odds with the concept of sustainability.

The indicators elaborated by ASviS show the evolution of the European Union and Italy towards the 17 SDGs. From 2016 to 2017, the EU showed some improvements for ten Goals, a drastic setback for one, while for five the situation remained fundamentally unchanged<sup>1</sup>. However, significant inequalities in the results achieved by individual European countries persist. In Italy, from 2016 to 2017 we can see improvements for nine Goals, a substantial stability for two and a worsening situation for the remaining six.

The choice in favour of the 2030 Agenda, proposed by the President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, took many observers by surprise, and has the potential to be a global game changer. The action plan for the next five years revolves around a vision in which economic, social and environmental policies appear coherently oriented towards the objective of making the European Union the “world champion of sustainable development”, as stated in the title of the opening event of the 2019 Italian Sustainable Development Festival. Von der Leyen’s programme incorporates

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<sup>1</sup> It was not possible to calculate the composite index of Goal 6 due to a lack of data

some of the proposals advanced by ASviS on that occasion, further clarified by the mission letters sent to the Vice Presidents and the Commissioners: a direct responsibility of each one, within their mandate, for the achievement of the SDGs and the reform of the European Semester, the process of policy coordination, which must have the 2030 Agenda at its core.

The programme of the new President-elect is a quantum leap compared to the wavering of the previous Commission, and strongly responds to the requests that have come from the Parliament, the Council and European civil society in the past twelve months. Now we must transform words into actions and in particular we must verify the reaction of some member states, that have been opposed to ambitious and long-term choices until now, not only on environmental issues, but also on economic and social ones.

With the onset of the new Government, sustainable development has clearly entered the Italian political agenda. The programme agreed upon by the Government parties comprises some of the proposals that ASviS made in the past years, like that of including the principle of sustainable development in the Constitution, the creation of an Urban Agenda for sustainable development, the use of the 2030 Agenda to redraw the country's socioeconomic system, and the evaluation of the socio-economic-environmental impact of new legislation. As at the European level, also in the case of Italy it is necessary to go past announcements and proceed with concrete actions: this is why this Report illustrates the actions - both system-wide and sectorial - that must be implemented as soon as possible.

In particular, for what concerns the system-wide actions and the structure of the governance for sustainable development, we recommend that the Prime Minister:

- sends to individual Ministers guidelines that explicitly indicate their responsibility for the achievement of the SDGs and of their Targets, with a particular attention to those that expire in 2020, in a similar way to what the President-elect of the European Commission did;
- strengthens and better defines the role of the Coordination Committee created in the Prime Minister's office to ensure an effective coordination of sectorial policies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, also in light of the restructuring of the European Semester on this basis;
- gives inputs that all the Explanatory Reports of law proposals include an ex-ante evaluation, also qualitative, of the expected impact on the 17 SDGs, starting with the next Budget Law,

We also recommend that the Government:

- transforms, with the next Budget Law, the Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE) into the Interministerial Committee for Sustainable Development, in order to align public investment choices towards the achievement of the SDGs;
- updates the National Sustainable Development Strategy, detailing its specific objectives, in light of the new policy goals, and presents a report on the state of its implementation in February 2020;
- urgently determines the necessary actions to reach the 21 Targets that Italy pledged to achieve by 2020, where it lags in strong delay;
- evaluates the possibility of developing an annual law on sustainable development, to act as an instrument to introduce systemic policy changes (without financial burdens) for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda;

- starts a dialogue with Regions, autonomous provinces and cities in the context of the unified Conference, to coordinate the actions that pertain to the various institutions for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda;
- initiates a vast programme of information and communication on sustainable development for the entire population, as was done for the introduction of the Euro.

The announcement of the development of an Urban Agenda for sustainable development must be followed by concrete actions, first of all by the reconstitution, on a new basis, of the Interministerial Committee for urban Policies. In line with the policy guidelines, we recommend that the Government and all political forces start, as soon as possible, a debate on the inclusion of the principle of sustainable development in the Constitution, using the text that is currently in Parliament as a basis. We also recommend the declaration of a “State of climate emergency”.

The last chapter of the Report covers the political actions that must be undertaken according to a modern and integrated vision of sustainable development, grouped in seven areas of intervention: climate crisis and energy; poverty and inequalities; circular economy, innovation and work; human capital, health and education; natural capital and quality of the environment; cities, infrastructure and social capital; international cooperation. These are concrete proposals, some of which (soil consumption, right to water, protection of ecosystems etc.) can benefit from the work already done by the Parliament. We must also ratify some important conventions signed by Italy, and implement European directives.

Compared to the past, as already noted, there is more support from citizens, businesses, labour unions, civil society and public opinion for bold actions, even if some appear to be costly in the short run. The sequence of actions is crucial, as is the attention to the most vulnerable. ASviS is available to support all institutions in this process and the success of its various activities demonstrates that the “demand for a future” coming from the Italian civil society finds in the paradigm of sustainable development the only credible answer. We believed in this idea 4 years ago when very few people even knew what the 2030 Agenda was. We continue to believe in this today, comforted by a new global awareness that “there is no time left”.

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