

## MAIN MESSAGES FROM ESTONIA'S VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2020

Estonia is devoted to the UN Agenda 2030 both domestically and internationally. In addition to the 17 SDGs, Estonia is also focusing on maintaining the viability of the Estonian cultural space pursuant to the “Sustainable Estonia 21” strategy. The SDGs are the basis for the “Estonia 2035” strategy that lays down Estonia’s long-term strategic objectives and relevant policy measures. The SDGs are also implemented by integrating them into government level development plans.

### Process

This is the second Voluntary National Review (VNR) since adopting the UN Agenda 2030. The preparation of the VNR was coordinated by the Government Office in cooperation with the inter-ministerial working group on sustainable development, the Commission for Sustainable Development, and several non-governmental organisations. It is based on the Government’s activity reports, data collected from non-governmental organisations and enterprises, and proposals from ministries and the Commission for Sustainable Development.

The implementation of SDGs is monitored through a mechanism based on Estonian sustainable development indicators and a regular data based reviews compiled by Statistics Estonia in cooperation with the Government Office and various ministries. The list of indicators was renewed in 2017 to harmonise it with global SDGs. All central governmental indicators are available in the online data-driven “Tree of Truth”<sup>1</sup> that illustrates the status of the goals by governance areas.

### Main conclusions

Estonia is generally successful in implementing the SDGs. In the past four years, results in several areas have been maintained or improved. In 2019, Estonia was tenth in the global Sustainable Development Report<sup>2</sup>.

Mapping the actions and indicator-based analyses indicate that Estonia is successful in several SDG-s. Our strengths are accessible and quality education, effective healthcare organisation, high employment rate with minimal long-term unemployment, and a high proportion of renewable energy in overall energy consumption.

Nevertheless, several SDG areas still require work. We need to focus on establishing gender equality (although decreased, the wage gap still remains among the highest in Europe), decreasing the risk of poverty for women and disabled people, including families with disabled children, establishing effective waste management and recycling, decreasing greenhouse emissions, and maintaining natural diversity. We also want to improve the health of our citizens, including mental health, and decrease the number of preventable deaths.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tree of Truth of Statistics Estonia – the standard for important governmental indicators: <https://tamm.stat.ee/>

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development Report 2019. Transformations to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, 2019: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2019/2019\\_sustainable\\_development\\_report.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2019/2019_sustainable_development_report.pdf)

The global COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020 affects the implementation of SDGs in several areas – economy, employment, healthcare, education, culture, innovation, etc. Specific impacts can be evaluated in future reviews.

The principles for Estonian development cooperation and humanitarian aid are established in the Strategy for Estonian Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2016–2020. As of 2020, Estonian development cooperation follows the new development plan for foreign policy and a separate strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Pursuant to Estonian foreign policy objectives and international agreements to direct more resources into vulnerable countries, Estonia will continue to react flexibly to the needs of less developed and post-conflict countries, developing island states, and landlocked developing countries in areas where Estonia can offer clear added value (for example, healthcare or improving the availability and quality of education).

## Next steps

The most recent important milestone in strategic planning is establishing the Estonian long-term strategy “Estonia 2035” that helps to integrate SDGs into sectoral strategies in a stronger and more systemised manner. We will continue to incorporate sustainable development into different policy fields.

Estonia and other European Union (EU) Member States agreed to integrate SDGs into European Semester, the EU instrument for economic coordination. This enables a centralised assessment of the SDGs on the EU level to increase the significance of the goals in Estonia and the whole EU.

We will also continue raising awareness on SDGs. This year we are going to participate in the EU Sustainable Development Week, discuss SDGs at the Estonian Opinion Festival and having Sustainable Development Forum. We are supporting and expanding the Coalition for Sustainable Development and creating a platform for sustainable development to enable the government and private sector, non-governmental organisations, and citizens to gain knowledge, take accountability and action in achieving the SDGs.