

Main messages from Iceland's Voluntary National Review 2019

Iceland is fully committed to implementing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development both nationally and internationally. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been integrated into government policy on social, economic and environmental affairs, with a particular emphasis on building a peaceful and just society, free from fear and violence.

Domestically, the Government aims to identify and better serve marginalized groups in society and to build partnerships to address the large environmental footprint of modern lifestyle. Iceland is still a net contributor to climate change, but heads for carbon-neutrality at the latest in 2040.

Internationally, Iceland shares its expertise in gender equality, land restoration and the use of sustainable natural marine and energy resources through its international cooperation contributing to global progress on SDGs 5, 7, 13, 14 and 15. The promotion of human rights for all, including LGBTI persons, is a cornerstone in Iceland's foreign policy and its international development cooperation – in line with Agenda 2030 and the Government's domestic priorities. In particular, Iceland has been a vocal champion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a key driver for the achievement of the SDGs.

Process

An inter-ministerial working group leads the work of the Icelandic government towards implementing the SDGs. It has mapped Iceland's position for all 169 targets and specified 65 priority targets that will guide the authorities in implementing the goals in the coming years. Data has been gathered for 70 of the indicators for the SDGs which are based on a defined methodology, but more work remains to strengthen the statistical foundation of the SDGs in Iceland.

The SDGs serve as guiding principles in Iceland's development cooperation, as the government's main goal in development work is to reduce poverty and hunger and to promote general welfare based on gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. New initiatives aim to build public-private partnerships in international development cooperation, as the SDGs will not be met unless the private sector is a part of the solution.

Strong emphasis has been placed on integrating the SDGs into the Government's five-year fiscal strategy. Linking SDG targets directly to specific government policy objectives offers an opportunity to map the means of implementation of specific targets, estimate funding allocation for the SDGs at any given time and anticipate potential synergies and trade-offs. Additionally, efforts are being made to actively involve local authorities in their important role in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Inclusion

The government acknowledges that implementing the SDGs will require a concerted effort by many different stakeholders. Therefore, the government has focused on consultation and co-operation on the implementation of the goals, both internationally as well as nationally. The Icelandic Youth Council for the SDGs gives young people a platform to express their voice to

policy makers. Children have the right to have their views heard and child participation is crucial for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Iceland's VNR report was made available in the government's electronic consultation portal to invite the opinions of various parties. This feedback was taken into account in writing the final report. Further and more effective consultations with various stakeholders is planned on a regular basis.

Challenges

Iceland is a Nordic welfare state with a relatively high standard of living. For ten consecutive years, Iceland has been ranked both the world's most peaceful country and the one with the greatest gender equality.

Despite real success in many areas, Iceland still faces a variety of challenges and has a way to go before achieving some of the SDG targets. The VNR report attempts to give a clear picture of Iceland's main challenges for each of the 17 goals, with the aim of identifying marginalised groups, such as immigrants and persons with disabilities, in order to leave no groups or individuals behind. Climate change is one of the major challenges in Iceland as well as responsible consumption and production.

The VNR sets out the next phase of Iceland's implementation of the SDGs, including the ambitious Government Action Plan on Climate Change, which is an example of a coordinated policy laid out by seven ministers in consultation with various stakeholders.