

MAIN MESSAGES FROM SLOVENIA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Slovenia recognizes the importance of sustainable development both locally and globally and reaffirms its commitment to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2017, Slovenia adopted Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. With the overarching objective of ensuring "a high quality of life for all", the document builds around five strategic orientations and 12 interlinked development goals and incorporates into this framework the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Strategy strives to balance economic, societal and environmental development.

Slovenia's commitment to balanced and fair development across the globe is reflected through its contribution to development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Slovenia shares global responsibility for eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and achieving the SDGs. National Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid Strategy by 2030 puts two cross-cutting themes at the heart of Slovenia's action: environmental protection and gender equality.

In 2018, Slovenia committed itself to conducting the second voluntary national review in 2020 and reporting on the progress towards SDGs. An all-inclusive process bringing together government departments, public institutions, NGOs, academic institutions, private sector, youth organizations and local stakeholders kicked off. Majority of vulnerable groups were included in the report development. A series of regional consultations and thematic workshops helped stakeholders identify Slovenia's challenges and best practices in achieving SDGs at the national and regional level.

At risk of poverty and social exclusion rates have seen a steady, persistent drop as many integration and social activation programs are provided to vulnerable groups. Besides supporting disease prevention programs, Slovenia advocates health promotion, raising awareness about health risk factors such as lifestyle choices and diet. This contributes to improved health outcomes for alcohol use, unhealthy eating habits and communicable diseases. Mental health programs are among key priorities of public health due to high suicide and self-harm rates. Educational institutions record high participation rate and extremely low early school leaving rate. According to PISA, Slovenia ranks as a high-performing education system. Nevertheless, gaps still exist between knowledge and skills, particularly in people with low education and older citizens who participate less often in lifelong learning.

Between 2017 and 2020, Slovenia recorded stable economic growth coupled with steady reduction in long-term unemployment and involuntary temporary employment. Quality of life of all citizens and stable economic development depend on how well the labor market mechanisms are adjusted to the demographic change. Helping youth find quality jobs early and adopting strategic migration policies are essential in this context. Slovenia needs to improve its flexicurity systems to increase employment levels, reduce labor market segmentation and optimize workforce allocation. It is important that catching up with most advanced economies takes place in a sustainable and steady manner. Slovenia recognizes that shift to low-carbon economy is key but acknowledges that the latter is a systemic challenge requiring well-thought-out action. Transition to circular economy will ride on RDI, which can open up countless opportunities in industry, infrastructure, mobility etc. Digitalization and available technological solutions will help accelerate the shift to circular economy.

Slovenia prides itself on abundant water resources providing clean and safe water. In 2017, groundwater provided drinking water for most of Slovenian population. The right to drinking water was enshrined in the Slovenian Constitution in 2016. In the sector of clean and available energy, Slovenian Government adopted the National Energy and Climate Plan 2030 which paves the way towards climate neutrality by 2050. A set of carefully planned measures ensures balance between the three pillars of energy policy: sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness. Slovenia must take

more action in the transport sector to reach the national emission reduction targets. Green procurement, which aims to promote local and organic food production, is another crucial mechanism underlying the shift to climate neutrality. Slovenia has put in place measures to preserve sustainable farming practices and family farms, to protect and promote traditional cuisine, to foster sustainable forest management and to preserve farmed landscape.

Amid COVID-19 pandemic, Slovenia is facing challenges that call for a coordinated action of all stakeholders in healthcare, economy, social care and humanitarian protection. Well-thought-out measures will mitigate the socio-economic impact of the crisis, ensuring that it does not disproportionately affect the most vulnerable population groups.