

CYPRUS

Voluntary National Review 2021

Main Messages

Introduction:

Cyprus' 2nd voluntary national review (VNR) provides an overview of the progress and the remaining challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The challenges have been aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic which halted socio-economic and environmental progress.

Governance / Stakeholder Engagement:

Building on a lesson learned from the 2017 VNR, an Intergovernmental Commission has been established for the implementation of the SDGs under the coordination of the Ministry of Finance, while the responsibility for each SDG target remaining with the competent ministry. Under the adopted integrated policy framework, stakeholders from Civil Society, Active Citizenship, Volunteerism and Non-Governmental Organizations play a pivotal role in the implementation of SDGs.

Response to Covid-19:

The Covid-19 reality, brought unprecedented challenges and changes to everyday life. Cyprus' government top priority was the protection and health of its citizens as well as the support of the social and economic fallout of the pandemic. The prompt public health interventions, including non-pharmaceutical measures and active contact tracing, with extensive and targeted testing, proved to be a valuable combination of strategies to effectively control the COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on the economy, the government has adopted a support package for employees, the self-employed, vulnerable groups and businesses, which in 2020 amounted to €2.6 bln or 12.5% of GDP. Cyprus' pioneering mobilization of its volunteer network, under the coordination of the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteerism and NGOs, received EU wide recognition for its prompt and effective support of vulnerable groups following prescribed security protocols.

Progress Overview:

In the period that elapsed since its first VNR in 2017, and given the five years of continuous high economic growth, Cyprus has shown progress in most SDG indicators, even though it continues to rank low among the EU countries. Cyprus performs well with regard to reducing poverty, securing good health and high tertiary educational attainment, but falls behind in quality education. It is ahead of many EU countries in terms of the gender pay gap and shows some improvement in the number of women in leadership positions. On the other hand, Cyprus experiences the highest influx of migrants in the EU with the number of asylum applications rising to 8746 in 2019

compared to the EU average of 1411 applications. Finally, regarding the environment, Cyprus' performance is below the EU average in most SDGs. Severe challenges exist with respect to sustainable agriculture, clean water and sanitation. Cyprus continues to lack behind with respect to affordable and clean energy, responsible consumption and production and climate action. However, the data show a continuous improvement towards most environmental goals, reflecting the fruition of targeted government policies and initiatives.

Building Forward Better:

Cyprus is in the process of preparing a Long-Term Strategy in order to adopt a robust new growth model to strengthen the economy's resilience and the country's potential for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable long-term growth and welfare. This objective will be achieved through an appropriate country-specific mix of investments and reforms included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, with an overall budget exceeding €1.0 bln of investment for the period 2021-2026. The NRRP takes into account the need to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the need to strengthen the foundations of the economy.

At the Governance level for the SDGs, Cyprus is implementing a project in cooperation with UNITAR aiming towards a whole-of-government approach in implementing a sustainable Development Agenda and at a stronger partnership with all stakeholders. Next steps include among others:

- A broader awareness around the SDGs within the Cypriot society, involvement and commitment of all stakeholders including the creation of an online platform: www.initiative2030.gov.cy.
- The training of government employees to contribute to the implementation of the national SDG strategy.
- A pioneering educational program for children with activities for each of the 17 SDGs.

Cyprus' coordinated efforts to implement projects, initiatives and actions reflect its commitment towards achieving the vision of the 2030 UN Agenda. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan is a key tool towards Cyprus' effective green and digital transition while leaving no one behind.