ISTAT INDICATORS for UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Keep on with the economic and social development ensuring meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising those of the future ones. This is the definition of "sustainable development" that is generally adopted in connection to the compatibility between economic growth and environmental protection.

At the Earth Summit of Rio, held in 1992, the foundations for the realization of a sustainable development policy had been laid down, and the Agenda 21 - the action plan for the 21st century - had been presented. In 2012, at the Rio+20 Conference, in the report 'The Future We Want', the commitments were renewed and the steps required in order to proceed towards a sustainable development were defined.

In continuity with the previous Millennium Development Goals, in September 2015 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in which the main lines of activity for the next 15 years were outlined at the global level (UN Resolution A7RES/70/1, New York September 2015). In the same year, consistently with the Agenda 2030, the Paris Climate Agreement (UN decision 1/CP.21, adoption of the Paris Agreement) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan) have been even adopted.

17 Sustainable development goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda refer to different areas of social, economic and environmental development, which need to be considered in an integrated approach, as well as the processes that may accompany and foster them in a sustainable way, including international cooperation and the political and institutional context.

As essential components, the indicators’ set includes several references to people’s well-being and to an equitable distribution of the benefits of development.

The 17 goals are the following:

1. No poverty. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. Zero hunger. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Good health and well-being. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Quality education. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Gender equality. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Clear water and sanitation. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Affordable and clean energy. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. **Decent work and economic growth.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

9. **Industry innovation and infrastructure.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

10. **Reduced inequalities.** Reduce inequality within and among countries

11. **Sustainable cities and communities.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12. **Responsible consumption and production.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13. **Climate action.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14. **Life below water.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15. **Life on land.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16. **Peace, justice and strong institutions.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17. **Partnership for the goals.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is, therefore, the global action plan of the United Nations for the people, the planet and the prosperity, taking into account the need to support universal peace and freedom, to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, achieving a sustainable transformation of the society, the economy and the environment by 2030, also in terms of safety, well-being and justice.

**Indicators classification on three levels**

In order to identify a common statistical framework as a tool for monitoring and assessing progress towards the objectives of the Agenda, an **Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs)** was set up by UN Statistical Commission. In March 2016, on the occasion the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission, the IAEG-SDGs proposed a first list of more than 200 indicators. This list has been updated in March 2017 and submitted for approval of the 48th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC)\(^1\). The current, revised set includes 244 indicators: 232 are different indicators, because some of them are considered relevant to more than one goal. IAEG-SDGs is currently considering 37 further indicators.

The indicators are classified by three “Tiers” (I, II and III). To the Tier I belong 84 indicators that are based on a standard methodology and are being regularly produced at the national level (34% of the total); 64 indicators equally based on standard methodology, but not being regularly produced belong to the Tier II (26%), and 86 indicators not based on standard methodology belong to the Tier III (35%). Lastly, four indicators (5%) have not been yet classified by tier, or belong to more tiers due to the heterogeneity of their components.

Goal 3, concerning **Good health and well-being**, has the largest number of indicators (27), followed by Goal 17 concerning **Partnership for the goals** (25). The goals dedicated to Energy and Climate have the fewest number of indicators (6 and 8 respectively).

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\(^1\) Statistical Commission, Forty-eight session, 7-10 march 2017, Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.
Goals 3 (Health), 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and 17 have the largest number of indicators with established methodology and available data. The goal 13, related to climate change, has no first-tier indicator.

The implementation process is still in progress and involves more updating steps to ensure a thorough review of the indicators, their correct classification by the different Tiers, and the preparation of the necessary metadata. An overall review is expected in 2020 and another in 2025.

A first report, based on data available from the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs, was circulated on July 2016\(^2\) and further updates are forthcoming.

**International initiatives for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

An important step to the implementation of 2030 Agenda was the establishment of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB), tasked of ensuring strategic leadership in monitoring and statistical reporting of the whole process. The HLG had worked on the creation of a Global Action Plan for the data on sustainable development, on which the UN Regional Commissions will develop the Road Maps. It is the “Cape Town Global Action Plan”\(^3\) for sustainable development data presented at the UN Word data forum (January 2017) in South Africa. It provides a comprehensive overview and a concrete list of actions, aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Countries and of the National Statistical Systems, to identify new strategies for improving quality of statistical production, and to strengthen partnership and cooperation.

At European level, the 2030 Agenda stimulated the launch of several initiatives. The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has set up a Steering group within the Conference of European Statistician (CES), working on a road map for the development of European statistics on the SDGs. This road map, focusing on the role of coordination of the National statistical offices (NSOs), aims to specify a strategy for the creation of a monitoring system of the SDGs, and will guide the CES members towards the achievement of the objectives set in the Declaration adopted on June 2015\(^4\). The Road Map will be discussed in the Plenary Session of the Conference of European Statisticians scheduled for June 2017.

The European Commission, on November 22nd 2016, adopted three communications that outline the steps to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The first report clarifies how the action priorities of the Commission can and should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development objectives\(^5\) and how the Commission intends to implement the principles of sustainable development and to give them further strength in its political action. The other two communications\(^6\) concern the Commission’s cooperation policies reviewed in the light of the sustainable development objectives.

**NSOs and SDGs indicators**

Eurostat is supporting the process to develop and implement the global framework, contributing to the definition of the set of indicators, implementing an analysis of the SDG information demand and the recognition of existing statistical information. The indicators were assessed on the basis of their relevance to the European context and to the domain of official statistics.

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\(^4\) [http://undataforum.org/](http://undataforum.org/)
In the first case Eurostat evaluated whether each indicator captures phenomena that are relevant to the EU member states. Several SDGs indicators, in fact, are meant to measure phenomena that are typical of different geographical contexts and levels of wealth 20% of indicators were considered “not relevant for the European context”.

In the second case, it is needed to identify what indicators are relevant to official statistics. To do this, indicators that are not subject to statistical methods or approaches (eg. those referring to the existence of legal frameworks/provisions related to specific issues) and indicators related to financial assistance to developing countries. It represents 26% of the indicators.

Following this recognition work, in November 2016, Eurostat published a first analysis of the European situation on the Agenda 2030 Goals, analyzing 51 indicators8. At the moment, Eurostat is developing a set of indicators aimed at monitoring the progress of SDGs in Europe, taking into account the EU policies, such as Europe 2020, the 10 priorities expressed by the Commission, and issues related to the circular economy.

This set of indicators will be further implemented and a new report is expected by November 2017.

In this context, the NSOs play a crucial role. Firstly, because of their methodological and technical know-how, but also as reference points for data production at national level and coordinators of national initiatives in the study and experimentation of alternative data sources as well. Several NSOs, including Italy’s Istat, take part in the HLG-PCCB for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Several European NSOs are already involved in this process, in particular those of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Luxembourg, Poland, Estonia, Romania, Turkey and Serbia.

**Istat and SDGs indicators: a challenge and an opportunity for the Sistan**

The Law 322/1989, the 2030 Agenda and the European Economic Commission, entrusted to Istat a dual coordination role: on one hand, Istat coordinates the provision of official statistics produced by the various institutional agencies participating in the National Statistical System (Sistan); on the other hand, the international community assigns to the NSOs responsibility for coordinating the national production of the SDG indicators. Therefore, Istat is conducting the analysis of the indicators of the Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs with an inter-institutional approach, inside and outside the boundaries of Sistan, in order to make possible the completion of a methodologically consistent mapping, integrated and shared, and an assessment of the overall availability of the SDG indicators.

The Istat Road map plans to continue to define and implement the indicators set out in Agenda 2030 in the development of the necessary, but still unavailable, indicators, promoting follow-up, sharing of information, development of necessary and fruitful synergies, in order to further pursuing in the dissemination.

The review of the SDGs indicators currently available included the "mainly statistical" ones, giving priority to those of the Tiers I and II.

Istat presents an update and an extension of the set of indicators for measuring sustainable development and monitoring its objectives (SDGs), released in December 2017. In this second release, 100 SDGs indicators are covered (34 more) out of the 173 available: 48% refers to Tier I, 36% to Tier II and 16% to Tier III. For 36 indicators already disseminated in December 2016, data have been updated or new breakdowns have been added.

62 indicators are identical to those internationally defined, 74 are similar or partial (i.e. where not all data are available, or where available data do not exactly meet the specifications required). In 37 cases, indicators have been integrated with additional "context" indicators, to provide information that is deemed useful for understanding and monitoring the target.

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The Good health and well-being Goal has the highest number of available indicators (17 out of 31), together with the Decent work and economic growth Goal (11 out of 20). The Indicators of Sustainable and Equitable Well-being used included in the SDG set are 38. There are many similarities between the two sets of indicators: in both cases the set has been composed in the light of a long-established literature, not tied to a rigid theoretical frame, but rather attributable to the contexts that generated them; and both refer to the "Beyond GDP" approach. The common scope is to offer a framework of quantitative information supplemented and enriched for measuring the welfare and sustainable development.

This new dissemination of SDG indicators witnesses the progress made in this field by the Sistan, together with other institutions and the civil society. In the next releases, foreseen in 2017 and 2018, the indicators’ set will be further updated, and widened, continuing in the effort to disseminate the whole SDG set and to improve its quality.

Useful links

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf
http://undataforum.org/