



ROMANIA 2023



Voluntary National Review

IMPLEMENTING THE 17 SDGs



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ROMANIA





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Implementing the 17 SDGs



Government of Romania
Department of Sustainable Development
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Report to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development
New York, July 2023

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KLAUS IOHANNIS
President of Romania



The Voluntary National Review presented in this document highlights the progress made at national level in terms of the structure of governance and implementation evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the actual progress in achieving some of them.

The data in the report is a mirror of the current situation that must incentivize us to accelerate our efforts for a sustainable Romania, European Union and world. There are only seven years left until 2030, when the global stocktake on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals will take place. This decade must be a genuine decade of action.

The report comes with a number of recommendations at the end, which need implementation without hesitation and which are also included in the policy documents prepared by the Presidential Administration in recent years. Promoting climate and sustainable development education, the preparation and training of sustainable development experts, including at the level of public administration, supporting and stimulating businesses and civil society in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the better use of available green finance are key to achieving national sustainability ambitions.



LÁSZLÓ BORBÉLY

State Counselor,

National coordinator for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda



DEPARTMENT OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Over the past five years, I have had the privilege of coordinating the national effort to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Romania. The second Voluntary National Review exemplifies our comprehensive approach to translating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into tangible actions at the national level.

Our implementation vision, as outlined in the report, is holistic, with centralized government coordination and a robust, inter-institutional structure. While our technical work focuses on monitoring indicators and aligning public policies, we must never lose sight of the true purpose behind our efforts. In my view, our aim is to embody the timeless universal principles that have guided humanity since the earliest civilizations. Thus, this document not only presents data but also carries powerful symbolic significance.

The creation of the second Voluntary National Review presented a valuable opportunity for extensive dialogue with all segments of society. These consultations serve as a means to gather positive energy and channel it towards mobilizing society for the mindset shift required to ensure a sustainable future by 2030.



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Summary

Romanian sustainability

Romania presents in 2023 its second Voluntary National Review, developed under the coordination of the **Department of Sustainable Development | Government of Romania**, an entity set up at the centre of government with the aim to ensure the alignment of policies and measures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national level.

Romania's first Voluntary National Review provided information on the institutional architecture for sustainable development at the time and on the 2030 Agenda's implementation process, with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals subject to detailed analysis at the HLPF 2018, namely SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 15 and SDG 17. The review also presented the progress reflected by the analysis of indicators in several sectors and the vision for the way forward, in the spirit of "leave no one behind".

The second Voluntary National Review presents Romania's **significant progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**. The review describes the robust multi-level governance structure, the efforts to strengthen mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, national and regional partnerships, and the current state of play for all 17 SDGs. To support SDGs' achievement, Romania has contextualised the 2030 Agenda through the **National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030**, whose implementation is facilitated by the **National Action Plan**, and the set of 291 **National Indicators for Sustainable Development**.

Voluntary National Review 2023 was drafted during a **multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory process**, similar to those that underpinned the elaboration of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030 and the National Action Plan. In parallel with the Voluntary National Review development, other important documents were produced, such as a *voluntary subnational report on mapping the SDGs* at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania, a *Youth Statement expressing support for the 2030 Agenda*, as well as the *Children's Voice on SDGs implementation in Romania*.

The integrated, indivisible and interconnected nature of the SDGs is reflected by the entire structure of the **governance framework for sustainable development** and is operationalised through the **network of sustainable development hubs** set up at line ministry level, coordinated from the centre of the government through the Department of Sustainable Development.

The presentation of each SDG includes Romania's response to the crises that impacted our society and in particular the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the Government's response to the "leave no one behind" principle and actions to enhance the resilience of vulnerable groups. There was a special focus to reflect the links between the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. For each SDG, various stakeholders contributed with examples of good practices to enhance community resilience to different pressures. The Voluntary National Review development process was an opportunity to engage all segments of society to accelerate the broad partnership for the successful implementation of the SDGs.

The Endless Column
Sculpture by Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957)

„You must constantly try to climb very high
if you want to be able to see very far.”

Constantin Brâncuși

Key messages

2015 was a turning point for humanity and Romania alike. Crucial events brought countries together, and the consensus expressed set the premises for a common global agenda of action until 2030:

Sendai Framework
for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
March 2015

Addis Ababa Action Agenda
a global framework for financing sustainable
development by aligning all financing flows and policies
with the economic, social and environmental priorities
July 2015

**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development New York, UN General Assembly**
a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, which
through the 17 sustainable goals and 169 targets
integrated and indivisible, balance the three dimensions
of sustainable development: the economic,
social and environmental
September 2015

Paris Agreement
on climate change
December 2015

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a response to the social, economic and environmental problems of the world, and implicitly of Romania, and the 17 SDGs represent a framework to enable the transition to a sustainable economy.

Romania is at the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, assumed by the Romanian Government, in the spirit of the Parliament's Declaration on the Sustainable Development Goals in April 2016.

The implementation of a holistic vision encompassing the principles of the 2030 Agenda requires:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Leadership | Professionalism |
| Partnerships | Collaboration |
| Action | Efficiency |

According to Romania's experience, the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires:

Political Will

The April 2016 Declaration of the Romanian Parliament draws courses of action by adapting working structures for the coherent and unitary approach on SDGs in parliamentary work; the fulfillment of a strategic framework for cross-sectoral coordination at the level of ministries and the establishment of a coordinating body under the direct authority of the Prime Minister

Vision

Romania has a Strategy that transposed the 2030 Agenda to the national context, adopted in November 2018, and a National Action Plan until 2030, adopted in June 2022

Coordination at the Centre of Government

The main role of the Department of Sustainable Development, established in 2017 under the Prime Minister Office, is to provide national coordination for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to report on progress made

Policy Coherence and Budgeting for Sustainable Development

Key strategic documents were adopted in 2022, creating the legal prerequisites for integrating the SDGs perspective into *policy planning methodologies* across the entire public administration, into *budget design and execution*, and into efforts to *strengthen the regulatory impact assessment system*

Inter-Institutional Network

A network of sustainable development hubs with specialists in 22 sectoral areas has been developed at ministerial level since 2019, to monitor the implementation of the SDGs and to follow up on the updating and harmonisation of sectoral policies to ensure policy coherence

Key Sectoral Coordination

The centre of government is also coordinating key areas for the 2030 Agenda implementation, such as the Strategy for Circular Economy and the Action Plan for the *energy efficiency of buildings*

Progress Monitoring

A set of National Indicators for Sustainable Development was defined and monitored with the support of the National Institute of Statistics and in cooperation with the ministries

Open Data Platform

The web platform *Sustainable Romania* provides statistical data on objective indicators, and also subjective indicators measuring public perception on the SDGs, with open data access

This platform needs to grow and include more information on policies, best practices, etc. as a one-stop-shop

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development

Steps are being taken to develop a Centre of Excellence as an innovative institution for research, education and dialogue on sustainable development, with branches in the 8 development regions of Romania, to align public policies and decisions in support of the SDGs

Critical Mass

In addition to the institutional dimension, a critical mass of people is necessary to change mindsets and to act in the spirit of sustainable development principles

A society-wide movement has emerged in support of sustainable development principles and practices, representing central public institutions, local authorities, academia, national research and development institutes, employers' associations and trade unions, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, youth associations and other segments of civil society

Sustainable development is for and about people, and all these institutional efforts that Romania has made and continues to make will not be sufficient if they are not pursued with passion, determination and, above all, hope.

Romania is determined to remain a regional hub for best practices and for the promotion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADRI	Associazione Donne Romene in Itali	NEET	Young people neither in employment nor in education or training
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ANAR	National Administration of Romanian Waters	NRRP	National Reform and Resilience Plan
ANES	National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men in Romania	NSCE	National Strategy for Circular Economy
AROP	At-risk-of poverty rate	ODA	Official development assistance
AROPE	At-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CF	Cohesion Fund	PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
Code	Romanian Sustainability Code	RDI	Research, Development, Innovation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	p.p.	Percentage point
Department	Department of Sustainable Development	RoAid	Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation
EC	European Comission	RoAlert	System operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs an used in major situations to alert population
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund	ROWL	Asociația Romanian Women's Lobby
EU	European Union	SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
EUROSTAT	European Statistical Office	SIME	Electronic Monitoring Inormation System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprisses
GAV	Gross Value Added	Strategy	Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030
GNI	Gross National Income	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus	UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic ans Social Affairs
IGSU	General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
IRCEM	Institute for Circular Economy and Environment <i>Înțelesul Lăpăș</i>	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IT	Information technology	UNHCR	United Nation Refugee Agency
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
LED	Light emitting diode	VAT	Value Added Tax
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	VNR	Voluntary National Review
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs		

1 INTRODUCTION

Five years after its first Voluntary National Review, Romania conveys itself to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with a remarkable progress made as a result of the national commitment to support the 2030 Agenda. Romania presents the results and challenges in achieving the SDGs, the governance framework and institutional mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, response to crisis situations and support to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups, as well as, best practices of institutions and civil society engaged in implementing sustainable development.

Adopted in November 2018, under the coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development, the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030* defines, in Chapter III *Implementation and Monitoring*, the entire governance framework for achieving the 17 SDGs, contextualized at the national level.

"A successful implementation requires a consolidated legislative and institutional framework with functional mechanisms and clearly defined roles."

The Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030
 Chapter III - Implementation and Monitoring

The construction of the *implementation and monitoring framework of the Strategy* has put into practice through the SIPOCA Project 613 [Sustainable Romania](#), co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Administrative Capacity Operational Program 2014-2020, in the effort to strengthen the governance framework for sustainable development, starting with 2019.

New decision-making and expertise bodies have been created: *The Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development*, the *Consultative Council for Sustainable Development*, the *Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development* and the *Coalition Sustainable Romania*. Powerful working tools such as the *National Action Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, the *Occupational Standard for Expert of Sustainable Development profession*, the set of *National Indicators for*



Sustainable Development 2030, the *Aggregator Sustainable Romania* - open data platform and the *Romanian Code of Sustainability*, which involve the whole society in the journey towards sustainable development, at all levels, from the government to the citizen are now in place.

The SDGs governance framework pictures both, the aspect of continuity and progress since the first Voluntary National Review and is discussed in full in the *Institutional framework and enabling policies on the 2030 Agenda* chapter.

For the *StrengthRO-SDGs* governance framework, in recognition of innovation and excellence in public administration as well as for a significant contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the UN DESA nominated the Government of Romania, through the Department of Sustainable Development, as the 2021 winner in the category *Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs*.



Over the past five years, halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Romania has taken on board the role of a regional hub in promoting the SDGs, as part of the 2030 Agenda implementation process coordinated from the centre of the government level. Romania has implemented projects in partnership with prestigious international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, and has joined professional networks with top-level expertise, such as the European Sustainable Development Network and the European Network of Sustainable Development and Environment Advisory Councils. Last but not least, Romania had an active presence in the most important UN events related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, namely the High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regional Forum, Stockholm +50, United Nations Conference on Water.

Similar to the process that supported the approval of *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and its *National Action Plan*, the process of the Voluntary National Review was extensively participative, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder. Representatives of ministries and other central public institutions, local authorities, regional development agencies, academia and universities, national research and development institutes, employers' associations and trade unions, private sector, non-governmental organisations and associations and other segments of civil society, as well as interested citizens actively participated and were involved in the review process. The *Methodology and process of preparing the review* chapter provides specifics on how the process was carried out.

The review was addressed to all 17 SDGs, contextualised to the national specifics through the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, taking into account the associated national targets, the policies and programmes that support them and the civil society response. For mapping each SDG, the associated indicators have been analysed since 2016. According to the National Institute of Statistics'

evaluation, Romania has achieved 62.1% of the SDGs, however significant challenges remaining. If better results are registered especially in terms of the decrease in the poverty rate, the increase in the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption, simultaneously with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Romania needs to accelerate its efforts to succeed in changing the current trend and reach some targets regarding SDG 4, SDG 6 or SDG 12. Crisis situations and measures to leave no one behind were also addressed in the SDGs assessment from chapter *Implementation of the 17 SDGs in Romania*, that outlines the current situation.

Similar evaluation processes, on a local scale, were carried out in parallel with the Voluntary National Review process. Categories in society were involved in the development of the *Children's Report on the Sustainable Development Goals*, the *Youth Declaration* and the *Voluntary Subnational Report* that incorporate relevant perspectives from society, other than those included in the SDG assessment, as well as future challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

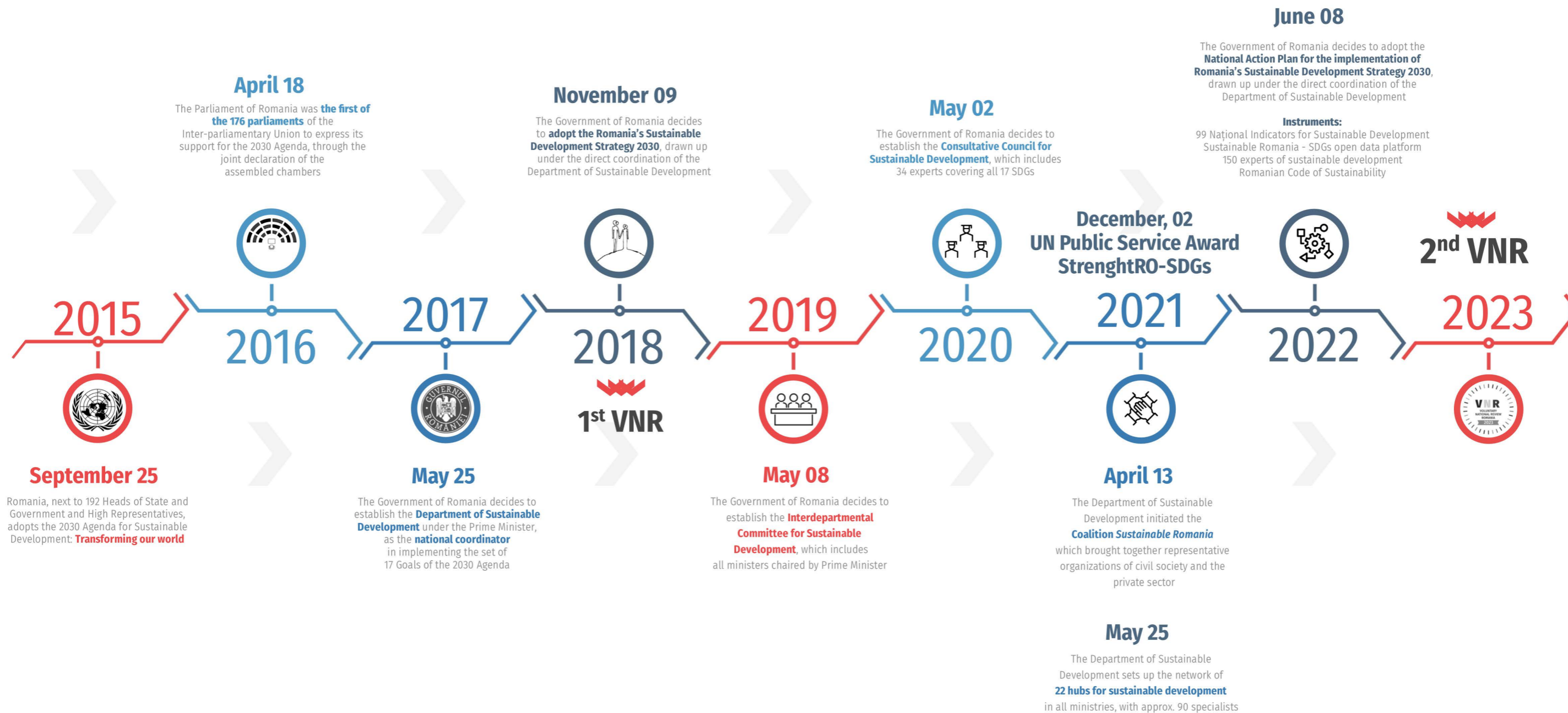
With the presentation of the second Voluntary National Review, Romania reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through its institutional framework and the instruments it has developed, Romania has succeeded in creating an enabling context for the implementation of the 17 SDGs. The process of drafting the Voluntary National Review included an honest assessment of the current situation, remaining challenges and next steps, in collaboration with the network of national stakeholders involved in the implementation of the SDGs.

The way to a sustainable future is ensured by continuing to adopt a proactive approach of incorporating whole of society and a global collaboration in the spirit of intergenerational solidarity advancing on the path towards a sustainable future.



Last meeting for drafting Voluntary National Review, 2023, Bucharest, Romania
 Photo source: Department of Sustainable Development

Romania's journey towards sustainability



2 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR REVIEW PREPARATION

WORKING METHODOLOGY

The Department of Sustainable Development coordinated the preparation and drafting of the second Voluntary National Review. A core team set up within Department established milestones and deadlines, resources and responsibilities. Stakeholders were identified, working groups were created and the consultation and drafting process was designed in accordance with the VNR drafting procedure. A consolidated draft of the second VNR was submitted to all stakeholders for final consultations, to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development's acceptance decision, and then to the Prime minister of Romania for approval before submission to the United Nations in June 2023.

The Department team also had the task to establish the communication strategy, the stakeholder engagement plan for VNR development, the consultation timeline and gathering of all information and inputs to review progress made in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation. The communication tools used were press releases published on the Department and partners' websites; announcements published on Facebook, institutional communication channels; online and in person events and workshops.

For the purposes of drafting the working methodology, Department representatives participated in all training and best practice exchange sessions organised by UN DESA on VNR development with the support of the host countries, from October 2022 to April 2023.

In addition to the first report of 2018, Romania's second VNR provides an assessment of the accomplishments of all 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, contextualized at the national level. As the first report on all 17 SDGs, the review took 2016 as baseline year, and was integrated and linked with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The main source of information to review the progress made in the SDGs implementation was the *National Indicators for Sustainable Development*. The statistical evaluations carried out by the National Institute of Statistics are presented in the statistical annex to the report.

The national review considered the response of all stakeholders who contributed with analysis, insights and good practice examples. Ministries responded with sectoral reviews for each target under their remit, in line with *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and *National Action Plan*. VNR is based on existing data, policies and strategies, and on studies and reports produced by local action bodies.

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS

The key element of the review and reporting process was the national governance framework for sustainable development, which engages all stakeholders in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation, using an integrated whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Due to this governance mechanism and to the *National Action Plan for the Strategy implementation*, this report included the views of all society sectors, from central government to civil society representatives.



Stakeholder Diagram
 Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Whole-of-Government Approach

All ministerial areas were involved in the VNR development process, represented by the experts of the Hubs for Sustainable Development Network set up in line ministries and other central public authorities. The Hubs for Sustainable Development contribution were crucial in the review process, to enable a snapshot and overall picture on the national sectoral policies, strategies and plans that support sustainable development policy coherence and the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

During the development process, the Hubs for Sustainable Development contributed to the development of a common working tool, the SDGs Matrix, an updated table of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development, linked to global indicators where appropriate, policies, strategies and action plans at national level that support the corresponding SDG targets, as assumed in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*.

Whole-of-Society Approach

Following the dissemination campaigns of the 2030 Agenda and the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, the Department has a database of more than 3,000 sustainable development supporters at national level, ranging from universities, national research and development institutes, local public authorities, regional and local associations, businesses, entrepreneurs, social partners, youth organisations, students and children, NGOs and civil society organisations, including vulnerable groups. Among them, as well as the representatives of Consultative Council for Sustainable Development and Coalition Sustainable Romania, were engaged by the department of Sustainable Development in an active dialogue and collaboration throughout the VNR drafting period.

Department of Sustainable Development's committed activity and prestige in the field of sustainable development and the open cooperation with all these actors over the past five years enabled nationwide civil society consultation, with representatives of all stakeholders engaged in the VNR development process.

National Statistics

Throughout this process, the review benefited from the expertise provided by National Institute of Statistics specialists and relies mainly on national statistical data. Systematic cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics started as early as 2019, after the approval of the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, for the establishment of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development. The analysis and selection of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development engaged both National Institute of Statistics and central public authorities and other agencies and organisations, providers of nationally relevant statistical data, as well as the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development. After the set of indicators was defined, Department facilitated the signing of tripartite collaboration agreements between the Secretariat - General of the Government, National Institute of Statistics and ministries/government agencies/organisations, whereby the parties committed to contribute consistently high-quality data to strengthen the national statistics system for sustainable development.

The National Institute of Statistics supported the Department of Sustainable Development in drafting regular progress reports on the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation, informed by national statistical data, updated and disaggregated, as appropriate, according to relevant national characteristics. The progress reports were published on the Department of Sustainable Development and National Institute of Statistics websites and presented to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development of the Romanian Parliament.

DRAFTING PROCESS

The VNR development process was initiated in June 2022 with the official launch of the National Action Plan for the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation. The national communication of Romania's commitment to present the VNR at the HLPF 2023 continued with the workshops organised in the eight development regions, a specific action of the National Action Plan, between November 2022 and February 2023.

Stakeholders were identified and invited to nominate their representatives in the working groups for VNR development between September and November 2022.

The first joint meeting of the working groups was held in December 2022 and was attended in person by over 120 people, both decision-makers and technical experts. The goal of this meeting was to present the timetable of activities, the report structure and the working tools, the necessary involvement and the working groups already in place. The tools, communication and work timetable were also presented.

A virtual working platform was created for participants in the consultations, including teams from the institutions and organisations. The workspaces were customised to each entity represented, and resources made available could be consulted, including links to UN reporting documents and databases. Individual work files were created and later aggregated into common work files.

In line with the principle of transparency and inclusive participation, the open data platform [Sustainable Romania Aggregator](#) was made

available for the participants in this process, to enable them to access national and European sustainable development indicators.



Working tools scheme
 Source: Department of Sustainable Development

From December 2022 to May 2023, in person and online meetings were organised for the four thematic working groups: Sustainable Social Development, Sustainable Environmental Protection, Sustainable Economic Development and Effective Institutions, Governance and Partnerships, with approx. 90 participants.

Consultations in working groups and aggregation of stakeholder's input continued until VNR was finalised in May 2023, when it was presented to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development for the acceptance decision. The VNR development process was completed in May 2023, once the report was approved by the Prime minister.



Consultation in the Sustainable Environmental Protection Working Group
 Victoria Palace - Government of Romania, February 9, 2023
 Source: Department of Sustainable Development

VOLUNTARY REVIEWS

Children's Voice

The *Children's Report for Romania's Voluntary National Review* is the voice of children on SDGs implementation, with a focus on those issues that are important for them. It is a report designed and written by children. Adults only had a facilitating role in the process and provided the children with the necessary background information for discussions on the different SDGs.

The Children's Report is a summary of the views, ideas and proposals generated by discussions spread over multiple stages of the process.

- Two online meetings attended by 33 children from seven NGOs, student associations, the Children's Board and five Local Children's Councils, supported by the UNICEF Representative in Romania. Children discussed SDG 1 and SDG 11, April 2023
- Children's voice in the process of drafting the Children's Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the participation of 16 children from seven NGOs, student associations and the Children's Board. The process was coordinated by the UNICEF Representative in Romania and Save the Children Romania. The children discussed the rights of the child: education, leisure and recreational activities; inclusion of vulnerable groups; climate change; health; digitalisation, which are directly linked to SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10 and 13, March 2023
- Children's views, statements and positions expressed in public debates, consultations, reports, surveys, mechanisms for child participation in decision-making, organized by the UNICEF Representative in Romania and Save the Children Romania, with the participation of more than 55,000 children



Children debating the SDGs
Source: UNICEF Romania

Youth Statement

For the first time, Romania's VNR includes the position of young people in support of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development at community, regional and national levels, reflected by the *Youth Statement on Romania's Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Young people's initiative to collaborate on the Statement reflected their awareness of the importance of active engagement in building the future, including by personal and professional upskilling.

The data collection process consisted of three group meetings with participating youth organisations, where specific objectives were proposed and monitored to create the concept paper. The discussion platform also served as a space for co-creation and alignment of youth organisations in the actual writing and formatting process.

Throughout this process, youth organisations had opportunities to inspire each other, to share good practice examples and, in the long term, to collaborate in concrete actions, projects or initiatives on topics of common interest: climate action, health and well-being, quality education. This collaboration also provided an opportunity for conversation, especially on current challenges faced by young people in Romania.

The following youth organisations contributed: UN Youth Association from Romania, with national coverage, the Romanian Youth Council which brings together federative structures with a network of over 400 youth organisations in the country, the only structure in Romania affiliated to the European Youth Forum and the World Assembly of Youth, the League of Romanian Students Abroad which has built a



Youth consultation
Source: LSRS

community of over 10,000 members, with representatives in over 50 countries, the Union of Students from Romania which brings together 104 youth organisations from the whole country.

Subnational Review

The Romanian Municipalities Association and the Association of Communes of Romania, under the coordination of representatives of United Cities and Local Governments and the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, has initiated, in parallel, the elaboration of the *Voluntary sub-national review. Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania*.

The subnational report is a powerful local awareness raising tool that help to improve policy-making process and stimulate *bottom-up* transformation. During the process of developing the subnational report there was a close collaboration between coordinating entities at local level and Department of Sustainable Development, to harmonize efforts and ensure complementarity with RNV.

The report was developed between January and May 2023. The methodology included the collection and primary analysis of qualitative and quantitative data at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania regarding two major thematic categories: *sustainable development goals and enabling policy framework*.

The report includes:

- The contribution of municipalities and communes to the implementation of SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, depending on the relevance for the area of responsibility of the local public administrations. The contribution consisted of projects carried out and subsumed to the respective SDGs, regardless of their degree of knowledge, or formalization at the level of development strategies at the local level
- Perceptions, opinions and social representations of representatives of municipalities and communes regarding the most important local SDGs, the SDGs degree of knowledge and acceptance by local authorities, as well as the blocking factors for the implementation of development projects at the local level. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and response policies at the local level were considered

The goal of the subnational report was to reflect the contribution of municipalities and communes to SDGs achievement, especially in cases where there is no aggregated statistical or administrative data at local level. The report presented the progress made by local authorities at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania, for the localization of the SDGs through the completed projects. Information on good practices or successful projects at local level was routinely collected by Romanian Municipalities Association and the

Association of Communes of Romania as a basis for information exchange between representatives of local public administrations and for the purpose of awarding performance. Starting from the results of the analysis, the subnational voluntary review indicated the areas for which additional measures are needed to achieve the SDGs and offered recommendations for a better assumption and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE OF LESSONS LEARNED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

Romania developed best practice models in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and shared such models with regional and international partners. Also, in order to broaden its experience, Romania participated in best practice exchanges and partnerships, prior to the preparation of the VNR development process, to learn from the experience of other countries engaged in the SDGs implementation.

Exchange of best practices with Italy facilitated by OECD

In November 2022, representatives of Department of Sustainable Development, Secretariat - General of the Government and experts from Romanian ministries, members of the Hubs for Sustainable Development, and representatives of the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security participated in a peer learning session on *Mechanisms and tools for addressing National Action Plan bottlenecks*. The OECD-facilitated workshop aimed at presenting and discussing mechanisms and tools to support policy coherence for sustainable development for the implementation of national sustainable development strategies in Italy and Romania on three levels: vision and leadership, institutional mechanisms, financing policies and impact assessment.

Round table at the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

In March 2021, Romania in partnership with OECD organised a round table on *Aligning the European Recovery and Resilience Plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of policy coherence and public service leaders*, occasioned by the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development in Geneva.

Discussions and best practice exchanges focused on the challenges of harmonising policies to align recovery plans after COVID-19 in the region with SDG policies, including the role of policy coherence in supporting green and digital transitions and resilience in general. The institutional mechanisms, civil servants' skills and governmental capacities needed to ensure sustainable recovery were explored.

Romania at the EU Voluntary Review workshops organized by the Commission for Member States

In 2021, the Council of the EU invited the European Commission and the European External Action Service to prepare the first EU Voluntary Review and to present it at the 2023 HLPF. EU Voluntary Review is an important milestone illustrating how the actions taken by the EU and the Member States deliver on the SDGs in the EU and beyond. EU VR drew from Member States experiences.

In June 2022, Romania submitted a national consolidated contribution by filling in a questionnaire for Member States, on general SDG implementation, external actions beyond EU borders, with a focus on supporting partner countries in implementing the SDGs, activities on policy coherence for development, by addressing impacts of policies on developing countries. Moreover, Romania participated between

November 2022 and January 2023 in the 4 ad-hoc EU Voluntary Review workshops organized by the Commission for Member States, for information, clarification and feedback purposes on the content of the Report.

Exchanges of best practices with partner countries in European Sustainable Development Network

In 14 June 2022, the Romanian Government, together with the European Sustainable Development Network and the European Environment Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Networks, organized at the Romanian Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels the 7th ESDN Peer Learning platform *Voluntary National Reviews: Challenges, Successes and Lessons Learned*.

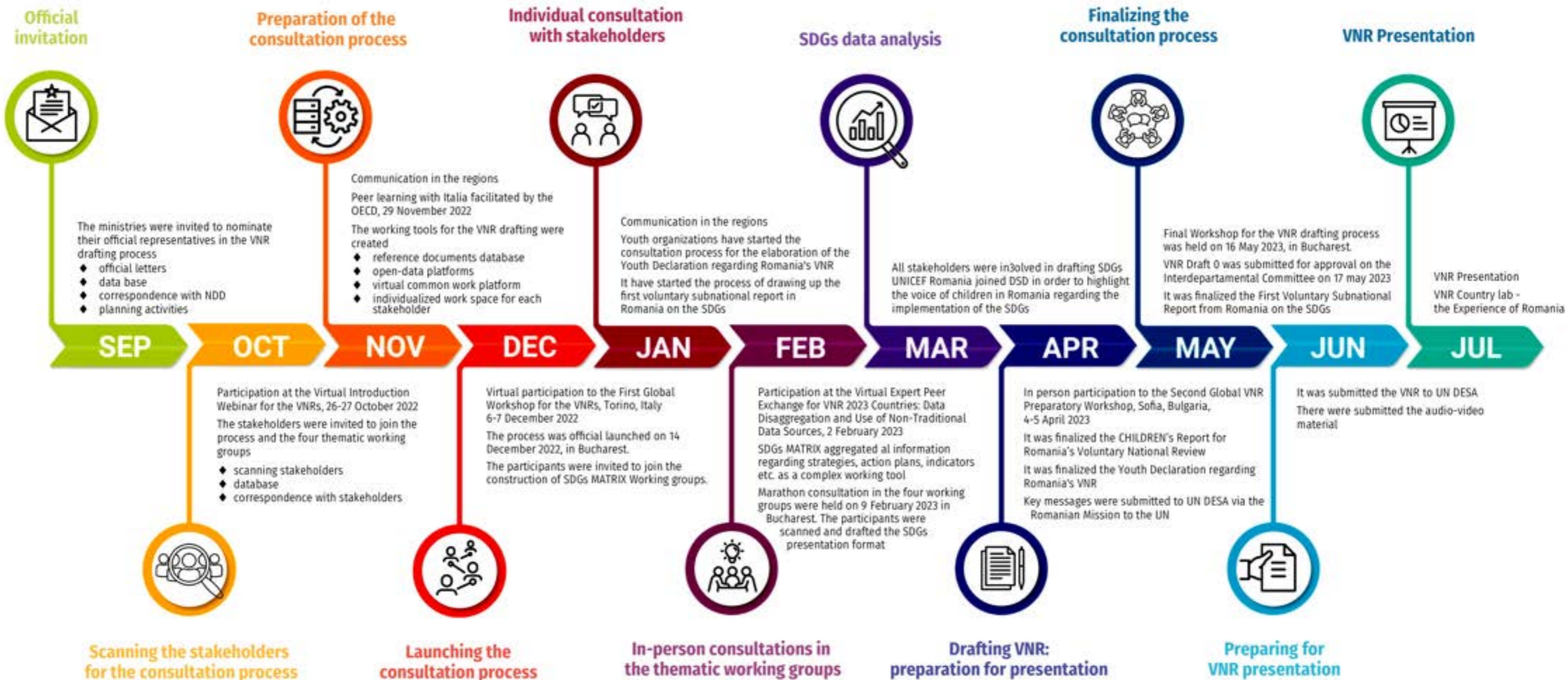
The goal was to facilitate learning from one another by exchanging examples of good practices between policymakers in Europe, with a focus on voluntary national reviews. Examples of good practices for voluntary reporting were shared by representatives of UNECE, Republic of Finland with the experience of preparing the second VNR in 2020, Swiss Confederation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands with the second VNR prepared for July 2022.



ESDN Peer Learning Session, Brussels, Belgium, 2022
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Representatives of the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Council also participated in the meeting and delivered messages. The Deputy Director of the SG.D2 European Green Deal Department presented the European Union project *Planning the EU Voluntary Review in 2023*, support for drafting the voluntary progress report at the European level in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, for HLPF 2023.

VNR PREPARATION PROCESS



3 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES ON THE 2030 AGENDA

SDGs COORDINATION AT THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Romania has made significant progress in achieving the SDGs since the previous review, due to the national institutional framework established for implementation, which reflects such progress. In 2018, sustainable development was still a shared responsibility between the *Interministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection into Sectoral Policies and Strategies at the National Level* led by the *Minister of Environment* and the *Department of Sustainable Development*, coordinated by a State Counsellor, within the Romanian Government.

Taking over the national coordination of the implementation of the 17 SDGs by the *Department of Sustainable Development*, a robust entity created at the centre of Government in 2017 under the coordination of the Prime Minister, has accelerated the achievement of the governance framework for strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development, demonstrating government-wide ownership of the 2030 Agenda.

Box 1 Tasks of the Department of Sustainable Development

- To coordinate the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation activities, resulting from the set of 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- To Plan and integrate data and information communicated by the institutions responsible for sustainable development
- To identify the most effective actions to implement the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy
- To generate suggestions for national SDG targets adjustment
- To monitor the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation based on the National Indicators for Sustainable Development
- To submit annual reports on Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation to the Government and the Parliament
- To represent in relation with ministries, public administration authorities, and with Romanian and foreign natural and legal persons
- To cooperate with the bodies in charge with Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, and with specialist structures of the Romanian Parliament and the Presidential Administration, other public or private institutions, NGOs and international organisations in the field
- To coordinate regular reporting to High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030* transposing the 17 SDGs to the national context was developed and approved in 2018, under the coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development. Prior to the strategy development process, three

debates were held, for setting up the drafting committee, made up of experts from ministries and public organizations. Local authorities, regional development agencies, academia, national research and development institutes, employers' associations, trade unions, private sector, non-governmental organisations and other segments of civil society and interested citizens were also consulted. Regional public debates and conferences dedicated to stakeholders were organised in the eight development regions of Romania. The draft of the new strategy was submitted to the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development of the Parliament and was subsequently approved by Government Decision.

"This strategy is the "lighthouse" that will guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all sectoral policies able to promote sustainable development at the national level. However, this alone is not enough. It is also necessary to involve all actors in the achievement of the goals of the Agenda. The involvement of every citizen is therefore imperative to the implementation of this strategy."

László BORBÉLY, State Counsellor
 Department of Sustainable Development, Government of Romania

Following an important multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory process, similar to those that underpinned the adoption of the strategy, the *National Action Plan* for implementing the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy was finalised and approved in June 2022. The National Action Plan is the umbrella document which clearly defines the directions, key actions and timeline to be followed in the Strategy implementation. At the same time, the National Action Plan empowers all stakeholders engaged in achieving the goals to adopt concrete actions for each SDG for which they are accountable, giving them the basis for independence in formulating individual policy choices.

A new set of *National Indicators for Sustainable Development* was developed to monitor and evaluate progress made in the Strategy implementation and was validated in February 2022, together with its *Guideline* for public authorities involved in the monitoring and reporting process. This up-dated set includes 291 indicators, of which 99 main indicators and 192 additional indicators, to measure the Romanian targets until 2030. The indicators are a benchmark to measure Romania's progress and some of them are linked to the European Union's indicators of sustainable development, *EUROSTAT SDGs* or to some of the global indicators of the 2030 Agenda.

"We finalised the sustainable development indicators monitoring system until 2030. It is clear that we cannot define coherent and pragmatic public policies without data. We cannot monitor the implementation of the Strategy without such essential data. The representatives of the institutions which have to report on the indicators received today useful information on the reporting mechanism for the 291 indicators. We will not stop. We demonstrated that we can team up at government level to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and we will continue to bring the whole of society on board in this endeavour."

László BORBÉLY, State Counsellor
 Department of Sustainable Development, Government of Romania
 14 February 2022

In order to advance the dissemination and implementation of sustainable development principles and the achievement of the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy targets in the business sector, the Department identified the need to develop a sustainability code, which would incentivize and support companies to produce sustainability reports. In 2022, the Department coordinated the development of the *Romanian Sustainability Code* and its *Guide*, which offer interested parties explicit information on content standards and on the process of producing sustainability reports. Consultation sessions with representatives from the industry, the Coalition Sustainable Romania, academia, employers' associations and federations from various economic sectors, businesses, financial institutions, banks, and public institutions engaged in the non-financial reporting process were held throughout the drafting process.

In order to facilitate the reporting process and to ensure transparency, the *Romanian Sustainability Code Platform* was created to publish reports and records of reporting entities, to provide access to best practices related to sustainability that can inspire other entities. The Platform provides open data information to support investors or other financial or commercial decision-makers based on the sustainability practices of reporting companies.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Starting from 2019, the Department initiated the construction of the governance framework as set out in *Chapter III* of the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*. It also initiated the process of designing and strengthening mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development so as to support the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

By developing the SDGs governance strategic and institutional framework, the Government of Romania aimed to become a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at national and regional levels.



Institutional framework for sustainable development
 Source: The Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy

Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development

It was set up in 2019, chaired by the Prime Minister, and includes all ministers of the Government. The Committee is an advisory inter-institutional body which follows up the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, monitoring and review processes. From 2019, the Department provides the permanent secretariat of it. Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development convenes in annual meetings at the initiative of the Department.

Box 2 Tasks of the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development

- To follow up the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation, monitoring and review processes
- To advance the integration of the principles and SDGs into all national policies, programmes, plans and strategies
- To propose for approval the Action Plan for the Strategy implementation
- To provide advisory opinions on the Department's annual report on the Strategy implementation, before being presented in the Parliament
- To propose improvements of the legal and institutional framework to enforce Romania's international commitments in the field of sustainable development
- To ensure the Strategy consistency with other international programmatic or policy documents in the field of sustainable development
- To coordinate the development of the National Indicators for Sustainable Development, to endorse it and to propose updates



Meeting of Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, 28 December 2021
 Source: Department of Sustainable Development

"I have already chaired a first Interdepartmental Committee meeting during my term of office and, together with my colleagues in the Government, we reviewed the state of implementation of this Strategy. As a UN member, Romania has been committed since 2015 to the implementation of the SDGs set out in the flagship document – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the goal is to place the country on a sustainable pathway through an integrated and multidimensional approach on the three pillars – social, economic and environmental."

Nicolae-Ionel CIUCĂ, Prime Minister, Government of Romania
 Launch event of the National Action Plan for implementing Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy
 Bucharest, 22 June 2022

Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development of Romanian Parliament

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development, set up in 2016 as part of the Committee for Foreign Policy of the Chamber of Deputies, supports policy coherence for sustainable development and provides a framework for debate to monitor the state of implementation of the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and of other public policies that may contribute to sustainable development. The Sub-Committee advances legislative initiatives to support Romania's sustainable transformation, analyses such draft legislation in view of their impact on the sustainable development goals, and, where appropriate, submits review or adjustment proposals to the Committees concerned. This structure is a bridge between Department of Sustainable Development and the Parliament of Romania.



First meeting of Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, 21 August 2021
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

„For us, the members of the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development, working with the Department of Sustainable Development has been and still is an ongoing challenge and pleasure. We are inspired by their actions! The challenge we have assumed so far has been twofold, more specifically, to contribute to the National Action Plan and to the definition of the national sustainable development indicators.”

Adrian CURAJ, Chairman
Consultative Council for Sustainable Development
Launch event of the Sustainable Romania Aggregator data platform
Bucharest, 7 November 2022

Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development

The Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development was set up in 2019 upon Department of Sustainable Development initiative, with the support of all ministries and other central public authorities and comprises 22 hubs with approx. 90 experts in sectoral areas. The structure of the Hubs network was designed as a construct of sustainable development sectors that transcends impending changes associated with electoral cycles or changes in government institutions, allowing harmonisation of policy coherence for sustainable development and continuity.

Each hub consists of existing technical staff from the central public administration and is responsible for driving and monitoring SDGs implementation in the specific field of institution. The Hubs of Sustainable Development are ongoing building and permanent dialog partners for Department for Sustainable Development and National Institute for Statistics in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The structure of the Hubs network guarantees that the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the SDGs are addressed in a holistic manner through cross-sectoral policy harmonisation, in a joint effort to implement *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*.

Box 3 Activities of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development

- To develop reports and recommendations on public policies for sustainable development in Romania
- To organise public debates and hearings on sustainable development issues
- To promote cooperation between public institutions, the private sector and civil society for sustainable development
- To participate in international conferences and events on sustainable development and exchange of best practices
- To cooperate with other parliamentary structures and international organisations to promote sustainable development
- To develop draft legislation and amendments to existing legislation to ensure sustainable development in Romania

Consultative Council for Sustainable Development

It was established in 2020 to ensure consistent participation of representatives of academia, research organisations and civil society in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation. The role of the Council is to propose the initiation and development of programmatic documents and methodologies for *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation. The Council consists of 34 specialists with expertise in the 17 SDGs and provides advice to Department of Sustainable Development starting from 2021. The Department provides the permanent secretariat of the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development.

Box 4 Tasks of the Consultative Council for

- To conduct surveys, research, analyses and to participate in debates on 2030 Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation
- To develop opinions and draft legislation on priority areas of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy
- To provide support for streamlining of the National Statistical System by National Indicators of Sustainable Development
- To cooperate with public or private institutions and bodies in the field of sustainable development
- To cooperate under national and international partnerships in the field e.g., European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network

Box 5 Sectoral areas of the Hubs for Sustainable Development

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ■ Foreign Affairs | ■ Public Finance |
| ■ Home Affairs | ■ European Funds |
| ■ Agriculture | ■ Justice |
| ■ Defence | ■ Environmental Protection |
| ■ Water and Forests | ■ Business Environment |
| ■ Culture | ■ Labour and Social Protection |
| ■ Research | ■ Health |
| ■ Communications | ■ Youth and Sport |
| ■ Regional Development | ■ Transport and |
| ■ Economy | ■ Infrastructure |
| ■ Education | ■ Tourism |
| ■ Energy | |

The allocation of human resources, their empowerment and the development of a cross-ministerial technical communication network are prerequisites for the success of the transformational process needed in the central public administration to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development to shift from “silo” approaches to “cooperation, coordination and collaboration” approaches.

In recognition of the contribution of public institutions personnel to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a new occupation was introduced in 2018 in the Classification of Occupations in Romania, expert of sustainable development, a unique approach in the EU. The Department supported the development of a postgraduate training programme, specifically tailored to the necessary activities and skills required to exercise this new profession. In the autumn of 2022, the pilot training programme was completed with the first batch of 150 sustainable development experts, people working for central public authorities, mainly for the 22 Hubs, but also for Secretariat - General

of the Government, National Institute of Statistics and the Romanian Court of Accounts.

In order to integrate these experts, as of 2022, the Romanian Administrative Code offers authorities and institutions of the central and local public administration, with responsibilities in the implementation of specific activities related to sustainable development, the possibility to include in their organisational chart the expert of sustainable development position.

„The training programme is over, but the learning never ends: this is a unique opportunity to assume the role of an agent of change, to promote a new SDG-oriented mindset in your institution, among colleagues, but also outside the institution.”

Mission Letter - Graduation ceremony of the course for sustainable development experts
Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 22 November 2022



Graduation ceremony of the first postgraduate course for sustainable development experts
Source: Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 22 November 2022

National Institute of Statistics

Official statistics in Romania are organised and coordinated by the [National Institute of Statistics](#), a specialist body of the central public administration, subordinated to the Romanian Government and under the coordination of the Prime Minister. National Institute of Statistics ensures the comparability and compatibility of national statistical information with the information produced by European statistics, collaborating with EUROSTAT, with other statistical offices of European countries, and with specialist UN and international bodies.

National Institute of Statistics collaborates with ministries and other specialist bodies of the central public administration, and with public services to ensure compatibility of the official statistical system with other information systems.

In 2022, National Institute of Statistics, in cooperation with the Department of Sustainable Development, Consultative Council for Sustainable Development and specialists from ministries and other public authorities providing relevant statistical data for monitoring progress made in *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation, completed the process of identifying the 291 *National Indicators for Sustainable Development*, of which 243 unique indicators, and of defining the 99 main indicators, as well as the [Guidelines](#) and [Fact Sheet](#) to guide public authorities involved in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* monitoring and

reporting process. The statistical data of the [National Indicators for Sustainable Development 2030](#) are accessible on the National Institute of Statistics platform.

Upon initiative by DSD and in partnership with National Institute of Statistics, a virtual platform populated with open data indicators for

Box 6 Tasks of the National Institute of Statistics

- To develop the system of statistical indicators, calculation methodologies, technologies and specific standards for obtaining indicators
- To design, implement and operate the statistical information system
- To collect, process and store data and information for statistical databases
- To organise and conduct statistical research and to develop economic and social surveys and analyses
- To inform the public and public authorities on economic and social developments at national level
- To approve methodologies for statistical surveys organised by public institutions and services

sustainable development, called [Sustainable Romania Aggregator](#), was developed and officially launched in 2022. The platform has a unique feature in that it retrieves official national and European statistical data in real time, from the National Institute of Statistics tempo database and the EUROSTAT database.

„The need to use statistical data is felt not only in the act of government, but also in ensuring the transparency of the act of government. Indicators are produced mainly by the National Institute of Statistics, with the help of ministries and agencies and, why not, in the future, also with the help of NGOs, which come to develop certain statistical indicators that we do not or cannot produce with a certain frequency and at a certain level of detail, sufficient to understand the phenomenon we are analysing.”

Tudorel ANDREI, President
The National Institute of Statistics
Launch event of Sustainable Romania Aggregator data platform
Bucharest, 7 November 2022

Coalition Sustainable Romania

The Coalition is a private, non-political initiative established by the Sustainability Embassy in Romania, in 2020, for ongoing dialogue with representative segments of civil society and engagement in Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy implementation and monitoring.

The Coalition includes more than 145 organizations, large companies, SMEs and NGOs, whose teams include more than 90,000 employees.



The Coalition provides a platform for dialogue and collaboration on sustainability issues, among public authorities, the business environment and civil society.

As a dialogue partner of the Department of Sustainable Development, the Coalition Sustainable Romania, both through the secretariat provided by the representatives of the Sustainability Embassy in Romania, and through its members, was actively involved in the elaboration processes of the *National Plan of Action for the implementation of 2030 Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, the *Romanian Sustainability Code* and VNR. During the consultation stages for the *Romanian Sustainability Code*, over 20 member organizations of the Coalition, under the coordination of the Sustainability Embassy in Romania team, carried out an extensive consultation process in order to draft working materials, centralize and transmit suggestions.

In subsequent stages, members of the Coalition participated in training sessions for understanding and using non-financial evaluation and reporting criteria.

The Coalition members present at these consultation and training processes represented a wide range of activity sectors, including retail, banking, transport, construction, consultancy, packaging and waste management etc.

„There is no doubt about the complexity and challenges posed by the new version of the CSRD Directive. Many companies do not currently have the skills and experience to remove the disconnect between business and sustainability and set sustainability as a core business principle. This is a major driver of change as the Directive will increase the quality and quantity of information that companies will report, using a European standard, and in digital format. The argument for sustainability may seem overwhelming, but it is a sine qua non for sustainable development in Romania.”

Dragoș Tuță, Founder and President
Sustainability Embassy in Romania
Bucharest, 2022

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The universal, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs requires the integration of the three dimensions of economic, social and environmentally sustainable development at all levels of society, by ensuring and strengthening the policy coherence for sustainable development.

Box 8 Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Guiding Principles

- Institutionalise political commitment
- Decision-making processes take into account long-term perspectives
- Inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination
- Participatory processes
- Correlation between policies and policy integration
- Consultation and coordination between levels of government
- Monitoring and reporting on policy coherence
- Financial resources and instruments

Under the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, the Government has committed to building policy coherence for sustainable development and in 2019 asked the OECD to assess the adequacy of the institutional and strategic framework and to make recommendations for improvement. The assessment took into account the eight PCSD guiding principles for promoting good institutional practices for policy coherence. Principles 5, 6 and 8 tackle the foreign dimension of the policy coherence for sustainable development, in terms of cross-border effects and spill-over effects.

The assessment resulted in two reports, finalised in 2020: [OECD Scan of Institutional Mechanisms to Deliver on the SDGs](#) and [OECD Report on SDG Budgeting in Romania](#) which identified strengths and bottlenecks related to PCSD, as well as risks of policy fragmentation, and advanced a set of [10 recommendations](#) for systemic changes, including legislative amendments.

„Romania has a strong strategic framework to guide the implementation of the SDGs. Building on these efforts, there are opportunities to promote greater policy coherence for sustainable development and to further develop government's capacity to link policy planning and budgeting to support the implementation of the SDGs.”

Project "Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Romania"
Romania - OECD Partnership, 2019

Romania decided to tackle these recommendations step by step. In July 2020, Romania adhered to the [Recommendation of the Council on PCSD/OECD/LEGAL/0381](#), and developed a strong, cross-sectoral connected institutional and policy framework to facilitate coordinated action between levels of government and participatory society engagement in the implementation of the SDGs.

Two years after the 2020 OECD assessment and faced with the challenge of implementing the *National Action Plan*, adopted in 2022, Romania requested the OECD to conduct a new assessment and to provide technical assistance to coordinate the *National Action Plan* implementation. The December 2022 OECD report ["Taking stock of progress in enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development in Romania: Opportunities and challenges in National Action Plan implementation"](#) detailed the actions taken by the Romanian Government to implement the recommendations advanced by the 2020 report, in view of the specific objectives promoted by *National Action Plan*, and made further recommendations to overcome potential bottlenecks in the SDGs implementation in Romania.

„Romania's commitment to sustainable development remains on track. Despite the impact of overlapping global crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of neighbouring Ukraine and rising energy and food prices, implementing the SDGs continues to remain an important commitment of the Romanian government. The development of the National Action Plan is the key achievement as it will guide all responsible actors in their implementation of the 2030Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy.”

Report Taking stock of progress in enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development in Romania: Opportunities and challenges in National Action Plan implementation"
OECD Report, 2022

The Romanian Government's effort to strengthen its sustainable development processes and structures continues with the development of a PCSD roadmap in 2023, with technical assistance provided by the OECD. The institutional framework development, and

the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the Department are prerequisites for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Romania. Three years after taking on the implementation of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on PCSD, the results have become visible and recognised both nationally and internationally.

Institutional Planning and Budgeting Mechanisms

2022 was a turning point in terms of improving the predictability and efficiency of decision-making processes by strengthening the capacity for policy coordination and impact analysis at the level of Government and coordinating ministries, as well as by enhancing the tools to improve the quality of public consultations at all levels of government.

Due to the technical assistance provided by the World Bank, starting from 2018, the Government of Romania has strengthened its strategic management system and developed a performance-based budgeting system in the Romanian central public administration.

At the same time, the technical assistance provided by the OECD to the Government of Romania since 2022, under the projects "Enhancing policy coherence, transparency and coordination at the Centre of Government in Romania", funded by the EC and "Enhanced Coordination Capacity at the Centre of Government for Achieving the SDGs", funded by the Economic European Area and Norway Grants 2014-2021, facilitated mainstreaming the SDGs perspective into strategic planning and regulatory impact assessment.

Thus, three key government decisions were adopted in 2022, creating the legal prerequisites for mainstreaming the SDG perspective into policy planning methodologies across the entire public administration, into budget design and execution, and into actions to strengthen the regulatory impact assessment system.

Box 9 Mainstreaming the SDGs into Policy Planning and Budgeting

- **Government Decision No. 379/2022** Supports PCSD and provides a framework for collaboration and dialogue between the Centre of Government structures and the Public Policy Units in line ministries. The National Strategy for Circular Economy and the National Integrated Urban Development Strategy for Resilient, Green, Inclusive and Competitive Cities 2022-2035 are just two of the documents adopted in 2022 that reflect a coherent approach to sustainable development
- **Government Decision No.427/2022** Improves the short - and medium-term public policy planning system by aligning strategic planning with budgeting. The development of coherent budgets aligned with clear public policy objectives is a crucial step towards the transition to green budgeting and SDGs budgeting
- **Government Decision No. 443/2022** Enables taking stock of all the aspects related to the regulatory impact assessment on sustainable development objectives. The impact assessment is conducted in line with Romania's obligations pursuant to the EU overarching policy objectives on sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. Reference to the use of the EC recommended checklist for regulatory impact assessment, the [Better Regulation Toolbox](#)

Romanian Court of Accounts

Romania is sending a clear signal on auditing the performance of public institutions in *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation by strengthening the role of the Romanian Court of Accounts. As a body entrusted to control the use of public financial resources, Romanian Court of Accounts initiated in 2022 the documentation process as part of a mission carried out with Department of Sustainable Development on "Auditing the implementation and achievement of Romania's Sustainable Development Goals". The goal of the mission was to understand the implementation and achievement of the objectives set out in *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and the extent to which the objectives assumed under *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* contribute to their achievement; the coherence of their mainstreaming into the implementation strategies and plans of the Ministries and Public Institutions involved with a view to identifying opportunities to trigger a performance audit mission leading to improved achievement of the objectives assumed and to collect information in order to identify the most appropriate audit topics to enable Romanian Court of Accounts to contribute to the national efforts for the implementation of *2030 Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*.

The Center, including its *hubs*, will facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation, policy development and knowledge exchange between higher education institutions and researchers in fields related to sustainable development, i.e., social, economic and environmental, and local and central public administration. The Center will take up, develop and implement sustainable development modelling capacities, supporting decision-makers in adopting innovative policy opportunities and adapting to optimal development scenarios.

Research teams will design, research and propose measures and solutions for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and new ways of using digital tools to improve adaptation, transformation and learning processes, from central government to citizen.

Training programme for Experts of sustainable development in public administration

The empowerment of public administration staff for the implementation of *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and the *2030 Agenda* will continue under an extensive training programme in the field of sustainable development, to include about 400 more employees of central public institutions and 1,600 employees of local public administration from all counties of Romania. The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development will also support this initiative of the Department of Sustainable Development. The training programme will start at the end of 2023, and the target is that by 2026 Romania will have trained 2,000 public officials as "experts of sustainable development".

The training of local public administration staff is an initiative that strengthens vertical coherence, transposing *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* into actions tailored to the specificities of regions, counties and cities. Sub-national SDG-related efforts were also driven by the [EU Regulations](#) providing cohesion and development funds taking into account, among others, the 2030 Agenda and the [Paris Agreement](#) on Climate Change.

One-Stop-Shop Platform

To support coherent local implementation of the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and *2030 Agenda*, Department of Sustainable Development initiated the construction of a virtual resource centre. This *one-stop-shop* tool will support public administration at regional and local levels to "localise" the SDGs and will facilitate realistic decision-making informed by sustainable development indicators trends and forecasts. The aim of the virtual resource centre is to implement the highest UX and UI Design standards to visually engage online visitors, to improve the process of transferring sustainable development best practices, providing a platform for easy dissemination of information to all stakeholders.

As an extension of the virtual *one-stop-shop*, is envisaged the connection with the [Indicator-based assessment of local and regional progress toward the SDGs](#) dashboard, developed by the Research Centre for Sustainable Development of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca. This Platform, using ArcGIS Dashboard technology, is primarily developed for institutions and local public administrations. It enables users to assess the sustainable development performance of each administrative-territorial unit in Romania e.g., municipality, town, city and county, by calculating the SDG index. An international standard methodology was applied to calculate the SDG index. The SDG index is a composite index, which sums up specific indices calculated for each of the 17 SDGs. Platform users may view and compare the SDG index for all administrative territorial units in Romania.

Promoting Sustainable Development and Public Awareness

Promoting the 2030 Agenda, the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* and public awareness are important to ensure sustainable development in Romania. One of the priorities of the *National Action Plan* is promoting sustainable development principles and values, through actions that promotes sustainable development concepts with the aim of achieving the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* targets and communication actions to support strategy implementation. Numerous initiatives adopted by Romania have contributed to raising awareness among the general public and stakeholders interested in *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* implementation. In recent years, the active involvement of public authorities, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organisations in promotion and awareness-raising actions has shown an increasing trend. Information events and public debates were organised, communication campaigns were launched, including with media involvement, and educational actions were organised by including sustainable development issues in school curricula.



European Sustainable Development Week 2022, Bucharest
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Since 2017, Department of Sustainable Development has been funding promotion projects proposed by national and international NGOs, foundations and associations. At least 20 projects are implemented in partnership with Department of Sustainable Development every year. In 2021-2022, an online publicity and communication campaign was initiated, using [Facebook](#) ads, web banners, setting keywords on Google SEO campaign, a database of more than 3,000 stakeholders was developed and newsletters are sent to them monthly, video spots were produced and broadcast and promoted on TV channels; the [Department of Sustainable Development website](#) was improved.



The „canotca” building workshop, Snagov 2022
Photo source: Department of Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Gala, a programme aimed at raising awareness and providing information on the 17 SDGs, has been organised since 2020, to highlight and award impactful projects. In 2022, after the *National Action Plan* was launched, events with international participation were organised to promote Romania's model of SDGs governance, as well as regional public debates to promote the *National Action Plan* and the implementation support tools.

ROMANIA IN THE INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES FOR THE 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Since the establishment of *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* in 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, Romania has participated in the works of this forum, UN's central platform for monitoring the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. Since Romania's first VNR, presented in 2018, Romania has organised every year HLPF-side events in collaboration with other governments, international organisations and the private sector.

Box 10

In 2022, Romanian Court of Accounts initiated audit missions to three ministries

■ Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests

Achieving the SDGs on the environmental component, crucial for a sustainable future - audit mission focused on SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 15

■ Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration

Public policies in the field of public water and sewerage services. Equity vs. disparity in access to these services - audit mission focused on SDG 6

■ Ministry of Energy

Renewable energy and contribution to energy independence - audit mission focused on SDG 7

From April 2022 to May 2023, Romanian Court of Accounts was engaged in a peer learning process with the Supreme Audit Institution in the Netherlands, on the 3 audit themes, mainly through workshops organised under a support programme coordinated by the Dutch Ministry of Finance, called the *Constituency Programme*.

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES AND TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS

Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration

In 2022, Department of Sustainable Development started designing the architecture of *Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration*, an innovative institution for research, education and dialogue on sustainable development, to align public policies and decisions in support of sustainable development goals. The Centre will have the headquarters in Bucharest and branches in all eight development regions of Romania, which will operate as regional hubs made up of research institutes, universities, local public authorities, SMEs, NGOs and civil society, supporting advanced and strategic thinking for sustainable development.

Box 11

HLPF-side Events Organised by Romania

2018

SDGs and 2030 Agenda- synergic initiatives, sustainable investments and inclusive incentives for resilient communities: The Romanian priorities for partnerships, in collaboration with BJD Reinsurance Consulting, July 16

Involving the civil society in the monitoring of the SDGs, July 17

2019

Governance of the SDGs: Learning from country experiences and defining an agenda for the future, in cooperation with Iceland and OECD, July 16

2020

An Interregional Dialogue on how SDG governance and policy coherence can accelerate action and progress on the SDGs in the post-COVID-19 era, in cooperation with Mongolia, OECD and Institute for Global Environmental Strategies Japan, July 15

2021

Global progress towards the SDGs: measuring, monitoring and evaluating the 2030 Agenda during and after COVID-19, in cooperation with Colombia, July 14

2022

Building Back Better: Measuring and Enhancing Policy Coherence for Effectively Delivering on the SDGs by 2030, July 14

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Each of the five UN Regional Commissions convenes annual regional forums to share experience and discuss concrete solutions on how to achieve the SDGs. The report of each regional forum reflects the region's official contribution to the HLPF. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the European Region was established by the Geneva-based United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its 67th session, in April 2017.

Romania was involved in the works of this forum every year, with speeches delivered by government officials at high-level sessions, participation in high-level round tables, organisation and moderation of side events: in 2021, "Aligning the European Recovery and Resilience Plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of policy coherence and public service leaders", an event organised in cooperation with the OECD and in 2022, "A Regional Attempt in Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in South East Europe", in collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council. In 2021, Romania co-chaired the forum with Portugal, being represented by László BORBÉLY, the coordinator of the Department of Sustainable Development.

EU Council Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The EU Council Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development follows up, monitors and reviews the EU internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across policy sectors at the EU level, drafts and negotiates EU Council Conclusions and provides a forum for the exchange of information on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at Member State level. The working party addresses overarching cross-cutting issues related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and takes stock of progress made in implementing the SDGs at EU level in an integrated and coherent manner.

The Working Party, in which Romania actively participates, also plays a leading role in the coordination and preparation, in synergy with other relevant EU bodies, of common EU approaches and positions in view of relevant international dialogues, processes and fora on sustainable development in which the EU and its member states are or will be involved, notably in the context of the United Nations, such as the key political messages for the HLPF from Team Europe. The EU Council adopted Conclusions on sustainable development in June 2017, April 2019, December 2019, June 2021; new Conclusions are being drafted for 2023. Romania chaired the Working Party in the first half of 2019, achieving a notable result, more specifically the adoption of the Council Conclusions "Towards an increasingly sustainable Union by 2030".

Cooperation with the OECD and the Initiation of the Accession Process

Joining the OECD is one of the most important country objectives for Romania after joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the EU. The OECD helps member countries maximise trade and investment, encourage innovation, increase business opportunities, empower private actors, support entrepreneurship and improve the quality of public services.

On 25 January 2022, the Council decided to take the first step in accession discussions with six candidate countries to OECD membership, including Romania. At the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in June 2022, the *Roadmap for Romania* was adopted, which sets out the terms, conditions and milestones for Romania's accession process and aims to align domestic legislation, policies and practices with those of the OECD. The main areas identified in the Roadmap to be covered in the Committees' technical reviews are structural reform, trade and investment, sustainable and inclusive development, governance, environment, biodiversity and climate, digitisation, infrastructure.

The Romanian Government successfully completed the first stage of the OECD accession process in December 2022, when it submitted the Initial Memorandum, according to the Roadmap. Romania will be assessed in 26 areas and will have to internalise over 230 legal instruments in legislation, policies and practices.

In relation to the OECD, Romania contributes to regional programmes and projects such as "Eurasia Competitiveness Programme", "South East Europe Regional Programme", "Strengthening co-ordination and strategic direction with Sub-Saharan Africa".

Romania is also a member of 2 OECD-related structures, namely the Nuclear Energy Agency since 2017 and the International Transport Forum since 1992.

As for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as mentioned in the presentation of PCSD institutional mechanisms, the OECD Public Governance Directorate has been supporting Romania since 2019 in creating a framework to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development and is working closely with the Department of Sustainable Development to support internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda by organising joint events for exchange of experience and best practices. Starting with 2018, Romania is also invited to participate in the annual OECD meetings of the PCSD focal points and of the members of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Council.

Regional Cooperation Council

It is the operational structure of the South-East European Cooperation Process, the only forum in South-East Europe launched and managed by the states of the region. Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Slovenia and Kosovo are participants in the South-East European Cooperation Process. The Council plays an active role in the implementation of regional programmes within the overall political guidelines set by the South-East European Cooperation Process, supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic integration process of the regional EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization candidate and aspirant countries.

Romania, a founding member of the South-East European Cooperation Process, has consistent participation in the Regional Cooperation Council on all 3 essential dimensions: political, financial and human resources. Romania's major political objectives in Regional Cooperation Council are to strengthen the South-East European Cooperation Process - Regional Cooperation Council relationship, according to the political forum-operational arm paradigm and to support the implementation of concrete and viable regional projects that contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

One of the main programmes coordinated by the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat is the *South-East Europe 2030 Strategy*, a joint call for action by all 13 South-East Europe economies. The Strategy seeks to promote and advance through regional cooperation the implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals within the South-East Europe region across the three dimensions of sustainable development: Prosperity; People; and Partnerships.

Romania organised events promoting the *South-East Europe 2030 Strategy* to increase its visibility among a wide range of audiences in the region. The *Forum Developing Multilateral Economic Relations in South-East Europe and in the Danube Region in the Context of Sustainable Development*, organised in October 2022 in Romania, Iasi contributed to raising awareness on the importance of the *South-East Europe 2030 Strategy* by bringing together business incubators, clusters, Regional Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, national and local public authorities, academic and research institutions, non-governmental organisations to explore business internationalisation opportunities in territorial economic clusters.

Romania also participated in actions organised by the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat during other important events, such as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2022, Romania

actively participated in 2 round tables, more specifically the *South-East Europe 2030 Strategy – A Regional Attempt in Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in South-East Europe and Coordination with Donors and Official Development Assistance in SDGs in the context of South-East Europe 2030 Strategy*.

Sustainable Development Solutions Network - Black Sea

Sustainable Development Solutions Network has been operating since 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. It mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development. Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea is one of regional networks. Romania is a Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea member and has representatives on the Governing Board.

Sustainable Development Solutions Network Black Sea mobilizes its members to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through active collaboration between researchers, teachers and students, organizing workshops and events, connecting young people across the region through Sustainable Development Solutions Network Youth Black Sea, engaging in actions aimed at integrating local communities in efforts to implement the SDGs, identifying gaps in SDGs monitoring the implementation in the region, participating in the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network - Sustainable Euro-Asian Seas Initiative.

European Sustainable Development Network

It is an organisation for representatives of public administration and other national experts in the field of sustainable development in Europe. European Sustainable Development Network, as a learning and exchange platform, mainly deals with issues related to the preparation and implementation of national strategies and processes serving the implementation of the international commitments related to sustainable development. The Association also fosters the pan-European dialogue and advises political decision-makers at European, national and sub-national levels. Romania has been a member of European Sustainable Development Network since January 2020 and has held a Vice-Chair position since December 2021.

Romania has participated every year and organised workshops and peer-learning events on challenges and best practices in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In October 2022, Romania hosted in Bucharest the European Sustainable Development Network Annual International Conference with the topic "Europe's position as a leading agent of change against the triple planetary crisis - climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution". The largest annual event brought together around 100 experts, civil servants and EU dignitaries in the field of sustainable development.



Meetings of national focal points, 2022, Dakar, Senegal
Photo source: Institut de la Francophonie pour le Développement Durable

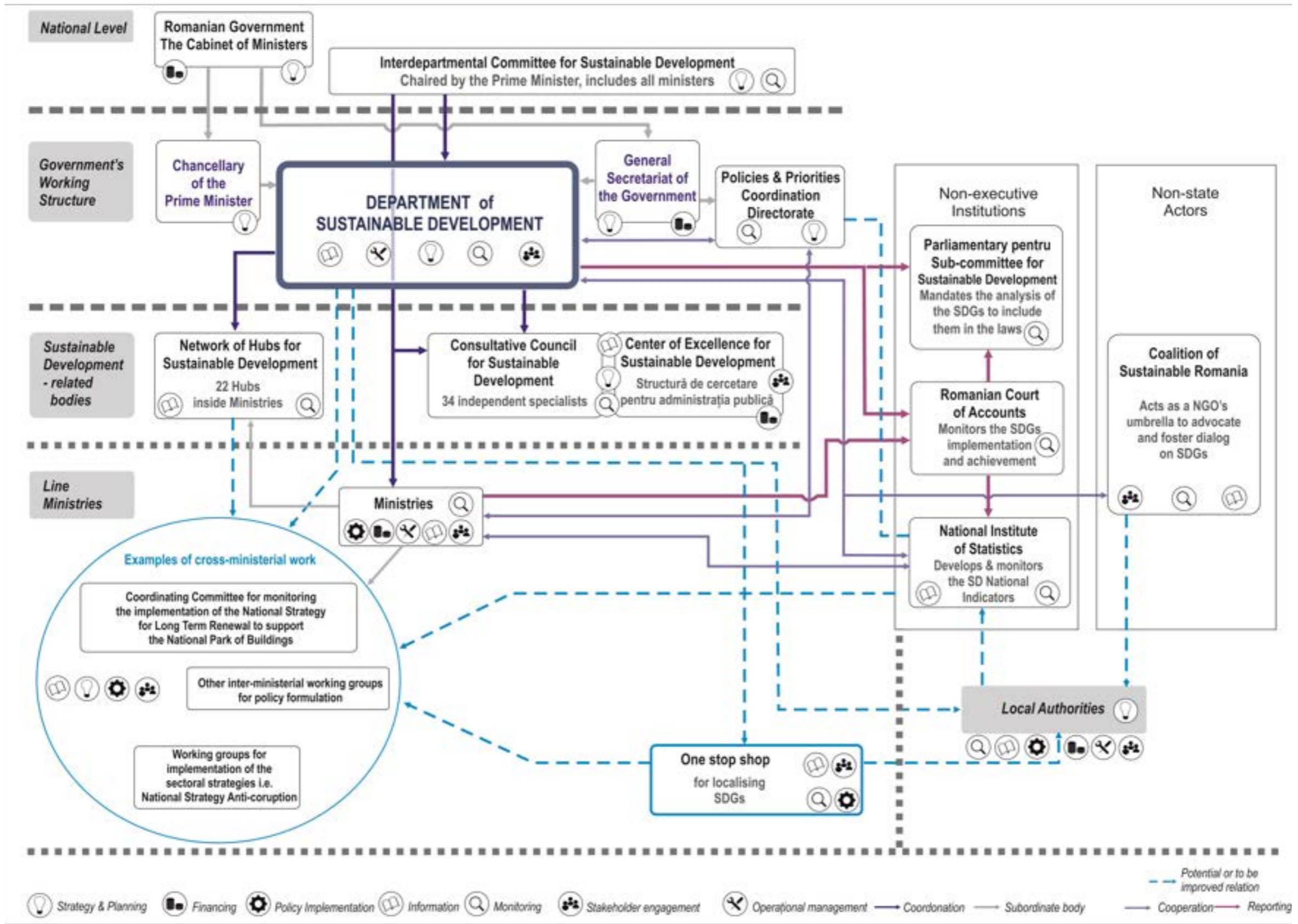
European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network

It is a European network of independent advisory councils providing advice and recommendations on environmental policy and sustainable development at national and European levels. Its mission is to promote sustainable development and environmental protection through independent advisory councils in Europe. This Council Network facilitates the exchange of best practice and experience between its members, supports the development of policies and programmes that promote sustainable development. More than 30 independent advisory councils from 22 European countries are members of the Advisory Councils Network. Network members are organisations with an advisory role in decision-making processes on sustainable development and environmental protection.

In May 2021, the Romanian Consultative Council for Sustainable Development joined the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network as a full member. In 2022, Romania, through the Consultative Council for Sustainable Development and the Department of Sustainable Development, was represented at the Annual Conference and anniversary edition, held in Helsinki, Finland. The theme was "The Critical Decade of Action: Mobilising Sustainability Transformation in Europe". During the conference, Romania announced the organisation of the 31st International Conference of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network in Bucharest, in 2023.

Organisation of La Francophonie / Institut de la Francophonie pour le Développement Durable

Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable is an international organisation that aims to promote sustainable development in the French-speaking space. The Institute supports the member states of the International Organisation of La Francophonie to promote and implement the 2030 Agenda and to this end organises annual meetings of national focal points. Starting from 2020, Romania has been participating in the annual meetings organised by Institute, with the goal to exchange experience on the implementation and monitoring of progress made towards the 2030 Agenda goals and to present best practice examples from Romania.



Institutional Governance Framework for Sustainable Development and Functionalities
Adapted from Report: [OECD Scan of Institutional Mechanisms to Deliver on the SDGs](#)

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 17 SDGs IN ROMANIA

THE GENERAL TREND OF THE SDGs IN ROMANIA



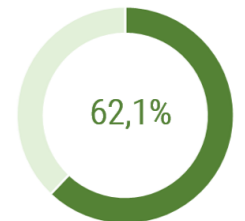
DASHBOARD OF ROMANIA ACCORDING TO THE ROMANIA NATIONAL INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2030

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Romania

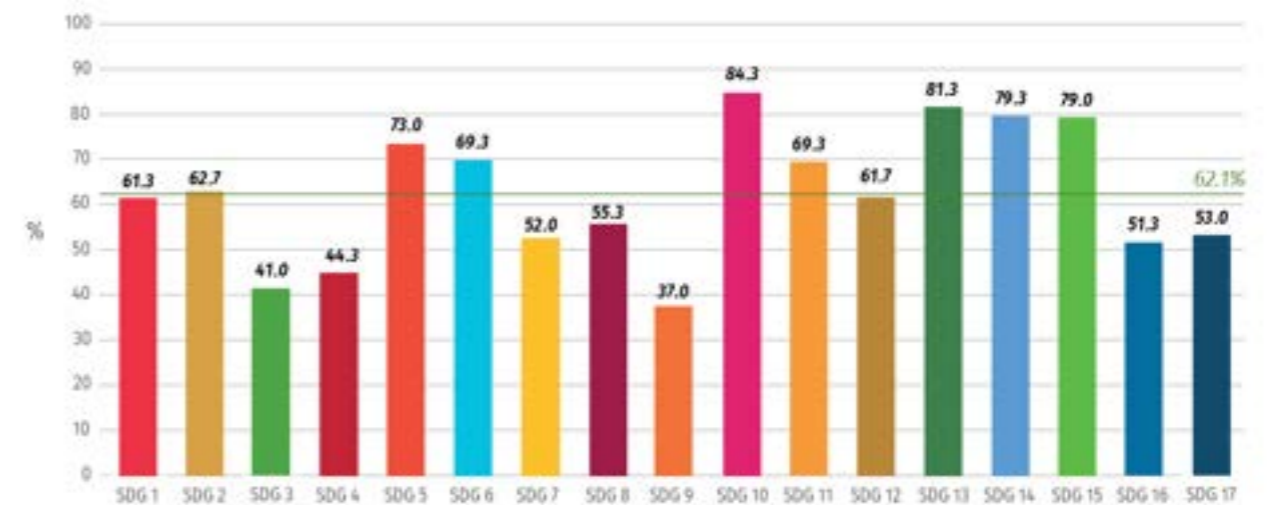
LEGEND

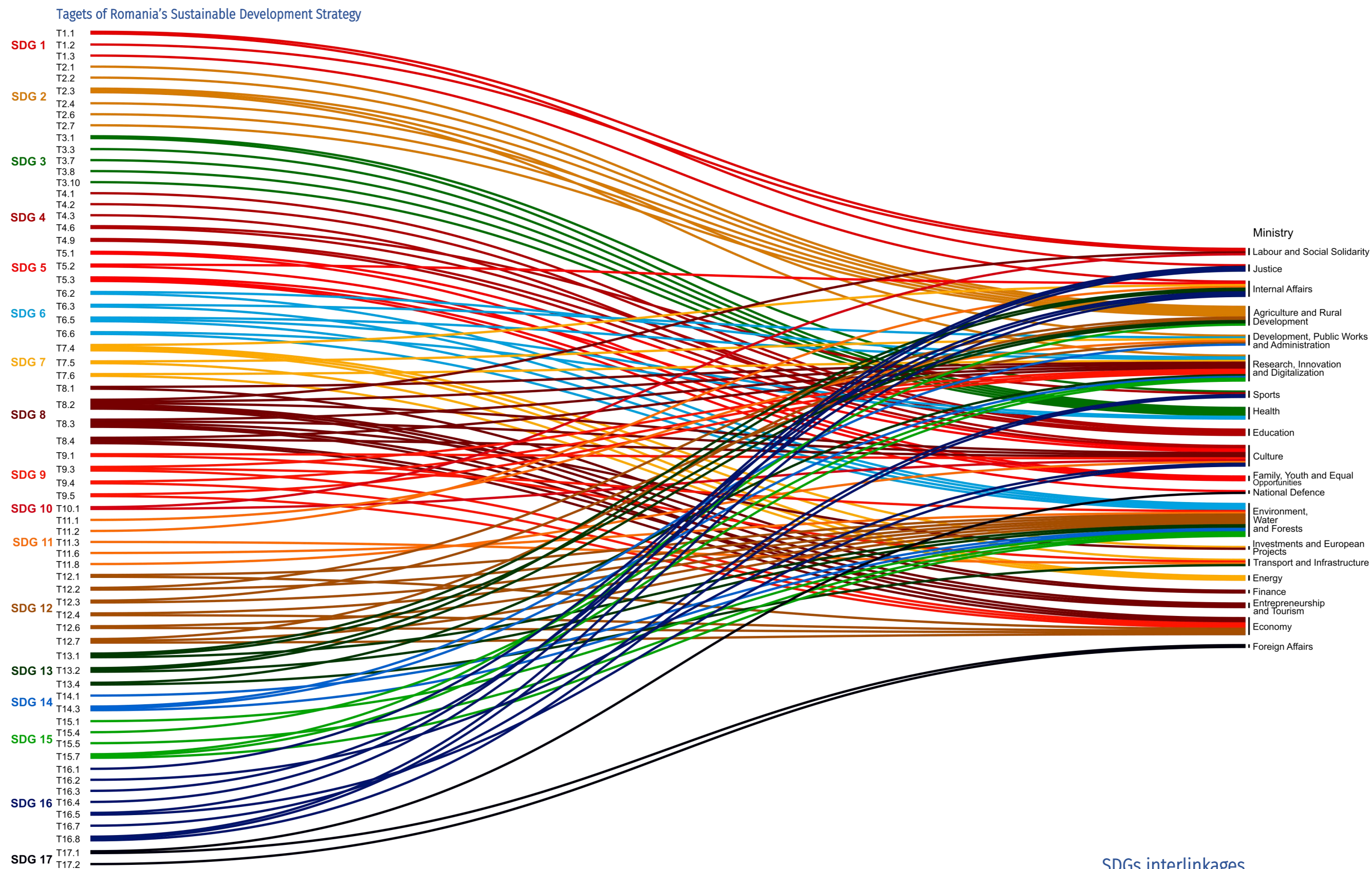
- ↓ Downward trend in reaching the target / goal
- Insignificant growth trend or stagnation in reaching the target / goal
- ↗ Moderate growth trend in reaching the target / goal
- ↑ Good trend in reaching the target / goal
- Trend above the target level

THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE in relation to the NATIONAL INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMNT



SDGs	Progress, %	Targets of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy										
		T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
SDG 1	61,3%	→	→	↗								
SDG 2	62,7%	↓	↑	↗	→	→	↑	→				
SDG 3	41,0%	→	→	↗	→	↑	↓	↗	→	↓	↓	
SDG 4	44,3%	→	↓	↓	→	↑	↗	↑	↓	→	↗	→
SDG 5	73,0%	↑	↓	↑								
SDG 6	69,3%	→	→	↗	→	↗	↗					
SDG 7	52,0%	↗	↑	↓	→	↓	→					
SDG 8	55,3%	↑	↓	→	↗	→						
SDG 9	37,0%	→	→	↗	↓	→	→	↓				
SDG 10	84,3%	↗	↗	↑								
SDG 11	69,3%	↗	↑	→	↗	↗	↓	→	↑	↑		
SDG 12	61,7%	↓	↗	→	↓	↗	↑	→				
SDG 13	81,3%	↑	↑	↓	↑							
SDG 14	79,3%	↑	↑	↓	↑							
SDG 15	79,0%	↗	↗	↑	↑	→	↓	↗				
SDG 16	51,3%	↓	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	→			
SDG 17	53,0%	→	↗	↓	↗							





SDGs interlinkages
A network analysis of the targets by ministries



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Romania's goal

Reduce the number of citizens living in severe and relative poverty in all its forms, reduce the number of persons living below the poverty line, encourage participation in the labour market of persons who are able to work, develop the protection and social assistance system

Overview

Romania continues to be among the European countries with a high share of population exposed to poverty, although it has focused on the improvement of life quality for all citizens in recent years.

The relative poverty rate at the 40% threshold of median equivalised disposable income per adult was 12.5% of all population in 2021, by 1.0%, below the value recorded in 2016. AROP decreased from 25.3% in 2016 to 22.6% in 2021. The number of poor people decreased by 13.7%, from 5.01 million in 2016 to 4.32 million in 2021. Of the poor people, 2.95 million persons were in severe material deprivation in 2020, decreasing by 37.3% compared to 2016. AROPE decreased from 46.0% in 2016 to 34.4% in 2021, and the in-work poverty rate related to the same period decreased from 18.9% to 15.6%.

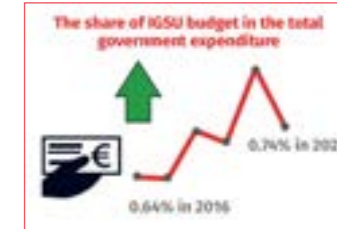
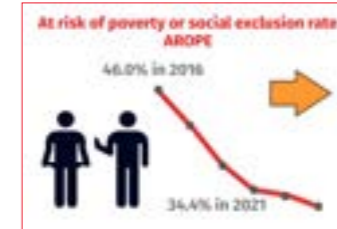
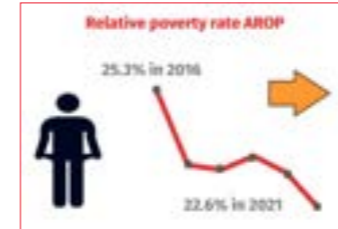
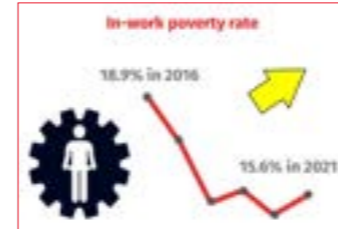
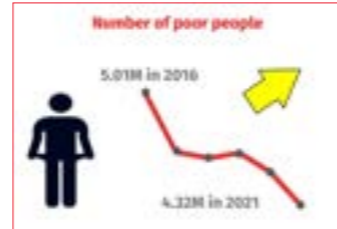
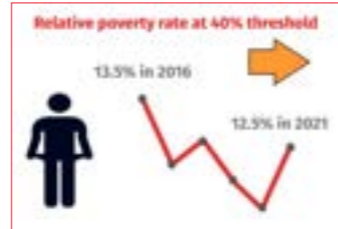
The unemployment benefit for unemployed with work experience recorded an increase by 20.5%, from about €100 in 2016 to about €110 in 2021.

Policies and measures

The unemployment benefit was granted based on *Unemployment Insurance and Employment Stimulation Law*, and the amount was established according to the contribution period and the social reference indicator. The social reference indicator value is updated ex officio, every year, by the annual average rate of inflation from the previous year; the last value is kept if the annual average rate of inflation is negative. It has been regulated that 100% of the social reference indicator must be considered for the unemployment benefit intended for persons with a period of contribution of at least 1 year compared to only 75% of it, as it was prior to the enactment of law.

As a measure to urgently boost mobility, since 2017, the persons registered as unemployed with the employment agencies have benefited from untaxable employment and activation premiums and installation premiums to encourage the change of domicile or residence in case of employment at a distance longer than 15 or 50 km.

The initiatives proposed in the *2015-2020 National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction* were successfully implemented, leading to significant improvement as regards employment, living standards and social services.



Response to COVID-19 pandemic

During the state of emergency and, subsequently, the state of alert, the employers who were forced to suspend the activity, temporarily, in whole or in part, because of the Covid-19 pandemic granted the employees a technical unemployment benefit. This benefit was also provided to the employees whose activities were suspended as a result of the epidemiologic investigation conducted by the public health directorates.

Subsidies were also granted to the employers who employed persons from the vulnerable groups: persons aged 50 years or more whose employment relations were ended not to their fault or their wish, during the state of emergency and alert; persons aged between 16 and 29 years registered as unemployed; Romanian citizens whose employment relations with foreign employers which were carried out on the territory of other states terminated, for reasons beyond their control, by dismissal.

In addition, the employees who concluded individual employment contracts for a definite period of up to 3 months benefited from the settlement of part of the salary, and, in case of temporarily reducing workload, the employees affected by the measure benefited from an allowance of 75% of the difference between the gross basic salary stipulated in the individual employment contract and the gross basic salary related to the hours actually worked following the reduction of the workload, calculated at the actual worked time.

Leave no one behind

To ensure access to pre-school education for all children aged between 3 and 5 years, *Every Child in Kindergarten Programme*, initially launched in 2016, has been extended since 2018 in the entire country. The programme was funded by the Romanian Government and implemented by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the local authorities.

The programme is an important initiative nationally implemented to increase children's participation in early education and reduce the educational gaps between children from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds. Thus, the programme supports the disadvantaged families who do not afford to send their children to kindergarten, giving them the chance to integrate in a structured educational environment and to benefit from a quality education.

In the programme, children benefit from an educational service package including the access to kindergarten, educational activities and nutrition, hygiene and health services.

Every Child in Kindergarten Programme has become the national programme following the enactment of *Law to encourage participation in pre-school education of children from disadvantaged families*.

Challenges

- Reduce the number of families at risk of losing the ability to meet their daily living needs due to illness, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol addiction etc.
- Establish a cost standard for the social services addressed to vulnerable groups
- Reduce the number of persons affected by severe material deprivation
- Accelerate the pace of reduction in the persistent poverty rate, which improved in 2020 by only 3.2% compared to 2016. Romania must continue the support measures and programmes for the employment, education and training of persons from vulnerable groups and for integrated social services
- The gap between the relative poverty rate at the 40% threshold of median equivalised disposable income per adult at national level placed Romania 5% above the EU average in 2020, and 6.7% above the EU average in 2021 at the gap between the in-work poverty rate

Next steps

Romania must continue the support measures and programmes for the employment, education and training of the persons in vulnerable groups, for the reduction of poverty and the settlement of the employment issues, and for the integrated social services, by implementing the national strategies on employment, social inclusion of homeless people, rights of disabled persons and long-term care and active ageing for the period.

Till 2027, the *Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme* shall support the marginalised rural communities, elders, children, single parent families with dependent children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as homeless people, victims of domestic violence, people released from prison, migrants and people addicted to alcohol and drugs, the last category increasing in Romania.

Local community contribution

The *Day Care Centre for Children* is the initiative of the local authorities in Zalău, Sălaj county, which changed the destination of an out of use thermal point in 2020. The centre provides cultural-recreational services for 76 children/day, after school and during vacations, especially for children in the marginalised urban community. The centre has three classrooms on the ground floor, one of them being intended as a foreign language laboratory, a dining room, a multi-purpose room and toilets, and two offices upstairs.

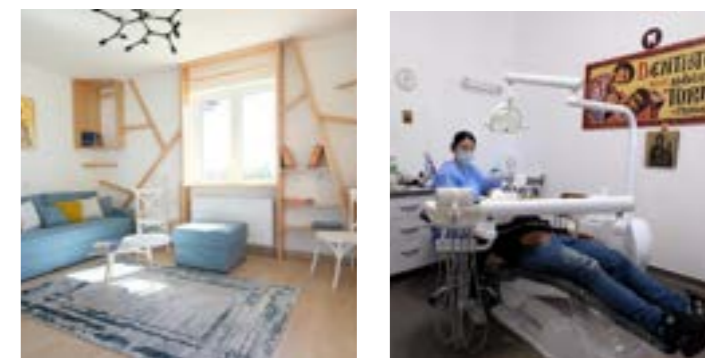
Improving accessibility to cultural and recreational services through the Day Centre has a positive impact on the quality of life of children in disadvantaged communities and demonstrates the commitment of local authorities to improving community living conditions.



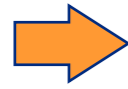
Day care Center for Children - before and after, Zalău, Sălaj county
Source: [Graiul Sălajului](#)

Civil society contribution

Since 2022, the *"Cradle of Stars" Settlement* project of Turnu Monastery provides a home for 18 orphans from foster homes of the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Prahova County where they feel loved and protected. For a better future, children are helped to integrate socially, including by enrolling in school. Through the dental office of the settlement, these children have already benefited from free examinations and treatments, and now they shall have the opportunity to live in a family environment and receive the care and attention they need. Turnu Monastery proves that active involvement in the community can make a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable members of the society.



"Cradle of Stars" Settlement, Turnu Monastery, Prahova County
Source: [Zarul Lumina](#)



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Romania's goal

Develop a sustainable and competitive agri-food sector to improve quality of life in the rural area and ensure living conditions like those in urban areas, promote local and ecological production, and traditional and mountain value-added products

Overview

Romania has a significant agricultural potential, and, from this perspective, agriculture could represent the key of Romania's economic relaunch. The share of agriculture in GDP increased from 4.3% in 2016 to 4.5% in 2021, exceeding the EU level, 1.5%-1.7% respectively. The GDP share of the agri-food product export increased by 0.4% in 2021, compared to 2016, reaching 4%. The increase in the contribution of agri-food product export to GDP was tempered by the increased negative contribution of imports, which reached 4.2% in 2021, showing an increase by 0.2% compared to 2016.

The share of registered area was 53.2% in 2021, and the annual average increase rate in the period 2016-2021 was 12.57%. Keeping this annual average increase rate, the entire area of Romania might be registered by 2030. Efforts to increase productivity and optimise the use of water resources were supported by the increase in the irrigated areas by 2.25 times in 2021 compared to 2016.

The analysis of indicators reveals that the share of obese population from the entire resident population showed an increase, reaching 10.9% in 2019, increasing by 1.6% compared to 2014, but below the UE average of 16.5%. Underweight and overweight children are essential indicators in the assessment of diet quality, nutritional diversity and variety of foods they eat, with a direct impact on their development.

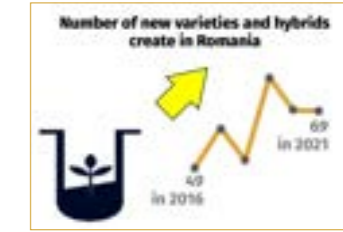
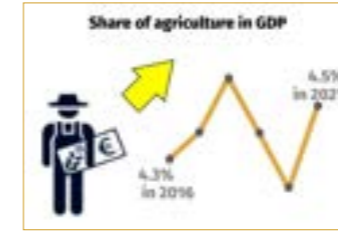
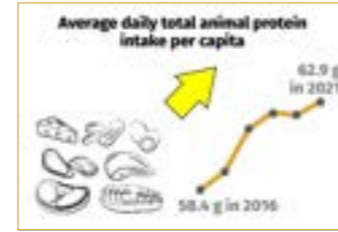
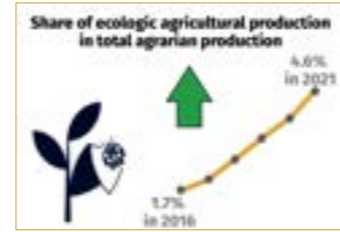
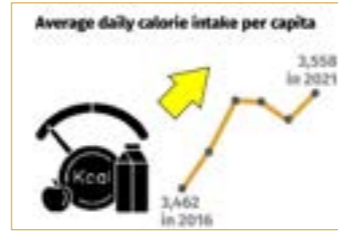
The research and development in agriculture increased, the budget allocation increasing by 0.9% in 2021 compared to 2016.

Policies and measures

Romania regulated the legal framework specific to the field of food waste, adopting in 2016 the Law on the reduction of food waste. Starting from 2019, the sectoral plans for research and development in the field of agriculture and rural development, called ADER - Agriculture and Rural Development, have been implemented, for methods of reducing food waste in the agri-food chain, at the national level. Campaigns were carried out to inform and raise awareness of final consumers and to promote responsible food consumption, in order to reduce food waste.

The Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Action Plan for its implementation were assumed in the 2021-2024 Governance Programme.

Efforts to increase productivity and to optimise the use of territorial resources have been supported by the Strategy on prevention and combating desertification and land degradation as well as the Programme for the implementation of the Anti-Hail and Rainfall Increase System 2010-2024.



Response to COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the vital role that agriculture and food industry have for the proper functioning of the society. Although, in times of economic growth, efforts behind securing food are less visible, the response to the pandemic crisis has made easier: the direct contract of local producers with the end consumer, the development of integrated distribution networks, the transition of restaurants' activity to home deliveries, keeping agri-food markets open while respecting social distancing rules.

Through measures, Romania contributed through a competitive agricultural sector offering the citizens the possibility to source from domestic production, helping maintain the competitiveness of local producers and value chains, leading to maintaining the current activity and the fair remuneration of farmers by making the farmer-consumer chain shorter.

Leave no one behind

To support the disadvantaged people exposed to hunger and poverty, the Romanian Food Banks recover the excess food and facilitate the donation, avoiding the food waste. The excess food may be provided through sponsorship and donation or in accordance with the law against food waste.

The activity started in 2017 with a single food bank only at the level of the municipality of Bucharest, which managed 57 tons of food. Later, a network was developed with coverage at the level of all the development regions of Romania. The amount of food recovered and donated by the Romanian Food Banks in the period 2017-2022 was 14,157 tons, worth approx. €23,166 million. In actions to support disadvantaged groups, the Food Banks collaborated with 572 partner NGOs and benefited 210,715 people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added considerable pressure to the Food Banks network, which has had more requests from both parties and affected categories of needy people. The effort made to respond to requests doubled in 2020 and tripled in 2021 the amount of food



Romanian Food Banks Network and quantities of food collected in 2021
Data source: Romanian Food Bank Network

collected and distributed, compared to 2017, reaching 2638 t and, respectively 3870 t.

In 2022, with the support of the Romanian Parliament, the Romanian Food Banks Federation hosted the FEBA, Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion, an annual event organized at the initiative of the European Food Banks Federation. The FEBA 2022 theme was *Strengthening Food Systems by Supporting the Resilience and Capacity of Food Banks*.

Challenges

- Increase the agricultural yield and the share of organic agricultural production in total agricultural production
- Increase the export of processed agricultural products, to the detriment of the export of raw materials and basic products
- Reduce the shortage of specialists in the field of active interventions in agriculture, climate changes and nutrition
- Reduce the food losses and waste
- Decrease the number of underweight and overweight children
- Increase the number of products certified at national level and European level
- Increase the financial incentives for conversion and reduce confusion with other quality schemes and low awareness of consumers as regards the benefits of organic production for health, climate and environment

Next steps

Romania consolidates its strategic advantage in agriculture by implementing the *National Strategic Plan by 2027*, whereby it aims at intelligent, resilient and diversified agricultural sector ensuring the food security, increasing viability of farms by stabilising the farmers' income and eliminating the disparities between farms, practising environmentally friendly agriculture on small farms, agri-environment and climate on arable land, maintaining organic certification and training new generations of farmers.

To stimulate the conversion from conventional agriculture to ecological agriculture, the *National Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production* until 2027 provides the stimulation of processing products obtained in the local organic agriculture system, complying with the strict production rules and principles and aims at obtaining organic products in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way

The *National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation for 2027* supports research and implementation of sustainable agricultural practices, including for the soil protection, identification and adoption of sustainable agricultural methods to manage natural resources and biodiversity. These practices shall result in future sustainable increase of agricultural production, environmental protection and promotion of responsible use of natural resources, thus contributing to a sustainable agricultural system and reaching the sustainable development objectives.

Good practice

A store network implemented, through a close collaboration with 150 local producers, holding international certification Global GAP for food quality and safety, the *LIDL Market programme* in order to develop environmentally friendly alternatives to the use of plant protection products and chemical fertilisers.

Depending on the season, 150 producers provide the Lidl Market with a significant percentage of season fruit and vegetables from Romanian farmers, ensuring the traceability for local products guaranteeing transparency at the level of the origin of products in the stores and highlight Romanian producers.



LIDL Market workflow
Infographic source: www.lidl.ro

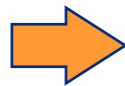
Business sector contribution

Association and cooperation relations are diversifying depending on the variety of connections between agriculture and other sectors of national economy. These relations are also important in agriculture, between economic operators and units responsible for storage, processing and marketing agricultural products. They facilitate the cooperation between the actors involved in rural development, promoting the creation of cooperatives, groups of producers, networks and clusters as well as operational groups. These efforts are made with the aim of jointly implementing a business plan in the agricultural and food industry with a focus on short supply chains and the local market.

To reduce the food waste, the business environment is voluntarily involved in the food donation mechanism, thus having facilitated the contact with receiving operators whose identification and contact details are made public on Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development website.

Through the cooperatives, groups of producers and other forms of association, the efficiency of agricultural production may be improved, costs may be reduced and sustainable production may be encouraged. It may lead to the increase in the food availability and nutrition diversity, contributing to eliminating hunger and malnutrition in communities.

By facilitating the cooperation between the actors involved in rural development and promotion of short supply chains and local markets, these relations contribute to ensuring access to safe, nutritional and enough food for all.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Romania's goal

Reduce rate of maternal and infant mortality, lower the incidence of infectious and chronic diseases, prevent and treat cases of substance abuse and mental diseases

Overview

The [life expectancy](#) in Romania was 75.6 in 2019, below the EU average of 80.6 years. The health system has been severely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused a temporary decrease by 1.4 years, up to 74.2 in 2020, with women living 8 years more than men, 78.4 compared to 70.5 respectively.

From 2016 to 2021, the infant mortality rate decreased from 6.8 to 5.7 deaths at 1,000 live-born, following the increase in the percentage of births assisted by qualified staff to 96.7%.

Tuberculosis continues to be the main epidemic disease, reaching 33.47 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021, decreasing by 38.51% compared to 2016. Viral hepatitis affected about 19.0 persons per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019. In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, by applying sanitary protection measures, the incidence of viral hepatitis decreased at 5.7 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020. HIV virus affects 40.8 persons per 100,000 adult and child inhabitants on a yearly basis.

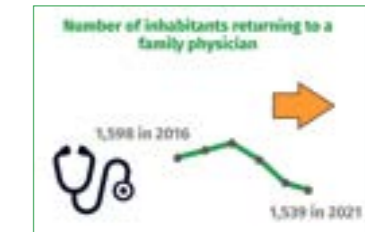
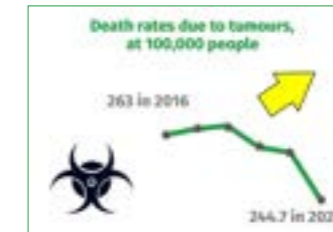
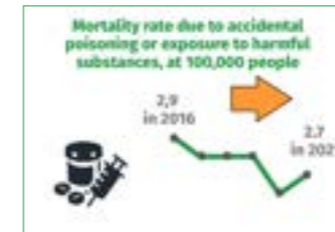
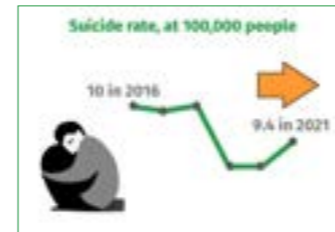
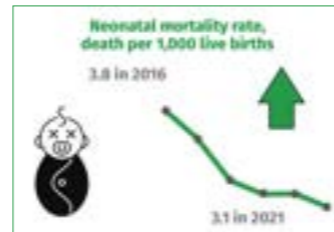
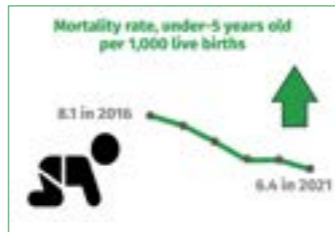
Cardiovascular diseases are the main cause of mortality, with an increasing rate from 767.9 to 912.3 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants from 2018 to 2021. The mortality rate attributed to diabetes is also on an upward trend, from 14.2 to 22.7.

Lung cancer is the most common cause of death and contributes to the mortality caused by cancer in Romania, which recorded a slight downward trend, from 232.8 to 212.1 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants.

The mortality rate caused by mental and behavioural disorders recorded a value of 2.5 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021, showing an increase compared to the pre-pandemic period.

Policies and measures

The *National Strategy of Health* aimed at reversing the health service pyramid, based on excessive hospitalisation, by increasing coverage with good quality and prevention-focused basic services, through family physicians, community centres and specialised outpatient care, including in vulnerable group communities.



Health services are accessible and/or free of charge to all children, being ensured by law, without payment or any connection with the parents' contribution. The groups exempted from payment include children under 18, young people up to the age of 26 enrolled in education, patients who are subject to national health programmes, pregnant women without any income and pensioners.

Emergency care is free of charge and more than 60 % of the population is exempted from the payment of fees required for the use of hospital services, due to the contributions paid to the sole health insurance national fund.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

3,312,085 confirmed cases were reported during the COVID-19 pandemic on 31 December 2022. Of these, 97.7%, 3,237,471 respectively, were cured cases, according to European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

The National Committee for Special Emergency Situations managed the pandemic combating measures. In order to prevent the spread of the virus, states of emergency and alert were decreed, establishing limitations on the activities of public hospitals for the admission and treatment of urgent cases, changes in the structure of hospitals for the admission of COVID-19 cases, procurement of materials and medicines needed in the pandemic, remote medical consultations in primary care and specialist outpatient clinics.

Measures were established to: increase the response capacity in residential centres for disabled persons, elders and other vulnerable categories; ensure the resilience of communities by wearing the protection mask, quarantine, isolation, etc.; reduce the impact of the type of risk by establishing the categories of allowed/prohibited activities, fulfilling the *Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination*.

The European framework was implemented to issue, check and accept the EU Covid digital certificate. From February 2021 to December 2022, 8,140,468 persons received the first dose, 42.4% of the Romanian population respectively, of which 50.9% adults and 7.2% persons under 18. Since July 2022, COVID-19 vaccine has been included in the *National Vaccination Programme*, being recommended to the entire population, but especially the persons in the risk groups, by means of family physicians.

Challenges

- Uneven distribution of family medicine practices, especially in the rural area, where the average number of insured included in the family physicians' lists is higher than in the urban area
- Insufficient human resources and infrastructure for community medical care, palliative and rehabilitation-recovery care
- Improve, professionalise, and diversify care facilities in institutional and non-institutional day and long-term care centres, including at home, for the elderly and disabled population
- Extend the population screening to increase the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment capacity
- Increase the proper response capacity to multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and major mental health problems, including forms of long-Covid and, in particular, the neuro-psychological forms generated by it, taking into account the risk of later developing neuro-degenerative diseases, strokes, etc

Next steps

The health system, including the rehabilitation, modernization, extension of hospital infrastructure shall be strengthened by implementing the new *National Health Strategy, Strategy for the Surveillance, Control and Prevention of HIV/AIDS, Strategy for the Control of Tuberculosis, Multi-year Strategy for the Development of Human Resources for Health and Law for the Prevention and Control of Cancer*.

To improve the access to medical care services, it is planned to equip at least 30 public health units, including through the construction of new buildings, providing ambulatory health care, the development of 200 integrated community centres and the construction of three operational regional emergency hospitals, increase by more than 50% of human resources in public health, diversify their skills, including for the creation of multidisciplinary teams for integrated case management shall improve diagnostic capacity.

Extensive public education and awareness campaigns are planned for all ages and at all social levels, on regular health screening, so that the activity of family physicians is directed towards prevention and active health monitoring. Vaccine coverage is aimed for more than 90% of all vaccines included in the national immunisation programme and 70% for the vaccination of groups exposed to the risk of diseases preventable through vaccination.

Civil society contribution

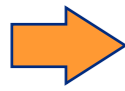
Give Life has set up the most famous social involvement initiative in Romania: #NoiFacemUnSpital. Thus, more than 350,000 persons and more than 7,000 companies supported with trust and their own funds the construction from scratch of the *First Children's Hospital*, providing multidisciplinary care to children with cancer and other serious diseases. What started as a project meant to renovate the paediatric oncology department of the *Marie S. Curie Children's Emergency Hospital* in Bucharest turned into the first building of 12,000 m² and 9 floors and continues the plans to create a true medical campus. The construction works are completed. The hospital shall be donated to *Marie S. Curie Hospital* and shall operate as a public hospital. Give Life currently works with the Romanian authorities to implement a pilot project for the management of the Department of Paediatric Radiotherapy within the Hospital, based on the corporate governance and medical governance principles.



Hospital for children with cancer, a project of the "Give Life" Association
Source: Give Life

Good practice

HIV Outcomes Romania, multi-stakeholder initiative including the HIV patient associations and pleading for the quality of life of HIV persons, co-organised public policy consultations and roundtables with community and non/governmental experts. Thus, the new *National Strategy of HIV/AIDS* is focused on the needs of HIV persons and provides for 2030: ZERO new infections, reach the new targets [UNAIDS 95-95-95](#) for testing-treatment-viral suppression in the risk communities, reduce the health stigma, increase the NGOs involvement, prevention programmes in the immigration receiving centres.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Romania's goal

Access of all children to early education, fair and qualitative primary and secondary education, substantial increase in the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, including for sustainable development

Overview

The Romanian education system ensures the right to attend the mandatory education free of charge, and the pre-university education includes classes teaching in 17 languages of the national minorities.

The participation rate in early childhood education of pre-school children between 3 years old and the age for enrolment in compulsory education, has registered on a decreasing trend, despite of the financial incentives offered to the low income families and due to the capacity deficit. In 2020, the participation rate was 78.2%, below the EU average of 93%.

Early school leaving by young people aged between 18 and 24 years decreased in 2021 to 15.3%, by 3.2% compared to 2016, but it remained significantly higher compared to the EU average of 9.7% in 2021. The share was higher in rural areas, being 23% among the disadvantaged groups, including Roma people, who were disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the education and school closing.

The tertiary educational attainment was low in compared to the EU average of 40 %, only 25 % of the population aged 25 and 34 years has a tertiary education diploma in 2022.

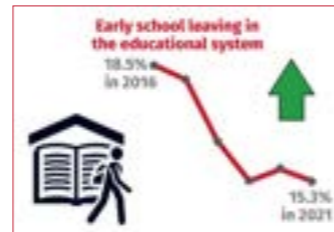
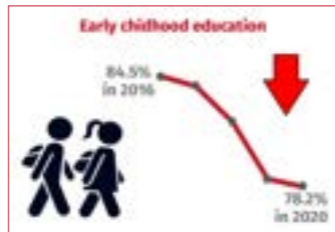
From 2016 to 2019, the number of graduates of vocational, post-secondary and master schools increased by about 4,000 persons, reaching 55.3 thousand persons. The participation in the educational and training of persons aged 25-64 years also increased by 3.7% in 2021 compared to 2016. The participation of adults in education and training was 4.9% in 2021, compared to the EU average of 9.1%.

Policies and measures

Improvement of learning quality, modernization of school infrastructure and ensuring the access to education for all children were supported by the *Strategy of Education and Training* and the *Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving*. Children and pupils at risk were supported through the programmes: *Hot Meal*, *Pupil Transport*, *Material Support for Children With Special Educational Needs*, *National Social Protection Programme*, *High School Vouchers*, *Euro 200 Programme for the Purchase of Computers*, *Vocational Scholarship*, *Social Assistance Grants*, *School Supplies*.

The programme *Schools of Romania* provided fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products and bakery products to the pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils. The programme *A Hot Meal Three Times a Week* by We Care Association, as well as additional Romanian language and mathematics classes in school-after-school mode was implemented.

In 2021, more than 225,000 children were enrolled in the *School-After-School* programme, which provided additional face-to-face classes.



From 2017 to 2020, the *National Programme for Rural Education* contributed to the modernization of school infrastructure, improvement of the learning process quality and ensuring access to education for all children in rural areas.

Ensuring access to vocational and technical education, improving the quality of the education process and promoting the integration of young people on the labour market were coordinated from 2018 to 2022 through the *National Strategy for the Development of Professional Training in the Dual System*.

The improvement of higher education quality through the modernization of curriculum, increase in the research and development capacity of universities and ensuring proper funding were developed through the *National Strategy of Tertiary Education*.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Distance learning and the temporary closure of many schools and vocational training facilities have limited the physical presence of the children and youth at the courses during the pandemic. The most affected were vulnerable children from rural areas, compared to those from urban areas, because of the limited access to digital equipment, which did not allow them to constantly participate in online courses, but also due to the fact that schools and teaching staff have not been sufficiently prepared for the distance remotely.

Educational support consisted of electronic social vouchers, the national programme *Home School* which provided digital devices to pupils in disadvantaged areas, the national programme of remedial activities for pupils, etc. For the after-school activities and remedial classes for 168,000 disadvantaged pupils, including from the rural areas and from the Roma communities, €30 million were allocated through the *REACT-EU Programme*.

Following the measures, in 2021, 91.3% of IT equipment from national education were connected to the Internet.

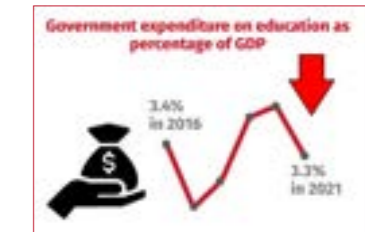
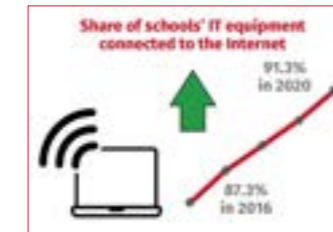
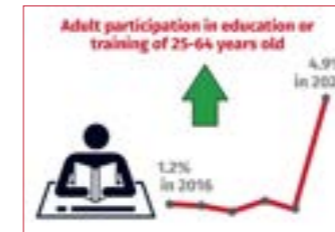
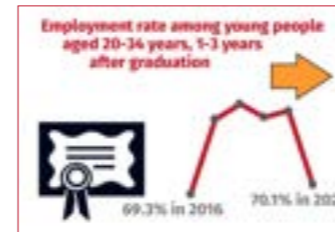
Leave no one behind

The Romanian education system ensures fair and proportional participation in education, regardless of ethnicity, in a learning environment which is inclusive for all. The share of Roma ethnicity in the school population in primary and secondary education was 6.6% in 2021.

For social, economic and educational integration of Roma community, the *Strategy on Stimulating Participation of Roma Children and Youth in Education Programmes* was implemented by providing scholarships, supporting early schooling. The after-school and teachers' training programmes were organised through the programme for improving the access of Roma children to education and through the project 2018-2020 *Romania Together for Roma Children Education*, funded by EU, which also involved the local community.

Although the data reveal a moderate reduction in the number of Roma children and pupils, which is 0.6% per year enrolled in pre-university education units, the implementation of public policies had the effect of increasing the number of Roma children graduating from primary and secondary education from 28% in 2016 to 51% in 2021.

Only 22% of the Roma youth aged between 18 and 24 graduated high school, compared to 83.3% of the entire population, which indicates a high early school leaving rate among this ethnicity.



Challenges

- Improve the level of knowledge of youth in terms of reading, science and mathematics and their subsequent employment, the increase in the employment rate of youth aged 20-34 years respectively, 1-3 years after graduation
- Reduce the rate of early school leaving by youth aged between 18 and 24 years, especially among women
- Increase the rate of participation in early education of children aged between 3 years and the official age for enrolment in compulsory education
- Increase the level of professional skills of adults and reduce the significant difference in the quality of education provided in urban and rural areas, and between social and economic groups

Next steps

Romania shall continue to make efforts to improve the quality of education through the policy reforms for safer, sustainable and inclusive schools, through the modernization of school infrastructure, rehabilitation, consolidation and construction of new schools, in the first stage in areas with the highest seismic risk in Romania, to ensure learning environments which are safer and improved for pupils and teachers in the selected schools and increase the institutional capacity to invest in the sustainable educational infrastructure.

The *National Programme to Reduce the Early School Leaving Rate* will support through the NRRP the establishment, endowment and operationalisation of additional services for the disadvantaged groups shall be implemented in response to the risk of early school leaving.

Reforms and investments are also provided to facilitate digital education, namely the development of the evaluation and content development platform, endowment of schools with digital equipment and technological resources for IT laboratories, digitalisation of universities and their training for digital future professions, establishment of regional consortia and development and endowment of integrated professional campuses.

In order to facilitate digital education, the digital educational content shall be prepared, including the manuals and open educational resources, digital pedagogies shall be adopted to improve the digital skills of teachers who shall benefit from training regarding the incorporation of digital instruments in the teaching and learning process.

To acquire the relevant skills, including technical and professional skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, the *National Educational Programme for Environment and Climate* shall be implemented, being extended on all SDGs, and the professional development of the employees shall be stimulated by increasing the number of participants in the specialisation classes, including the expert of sustainable development.

Companies contribution

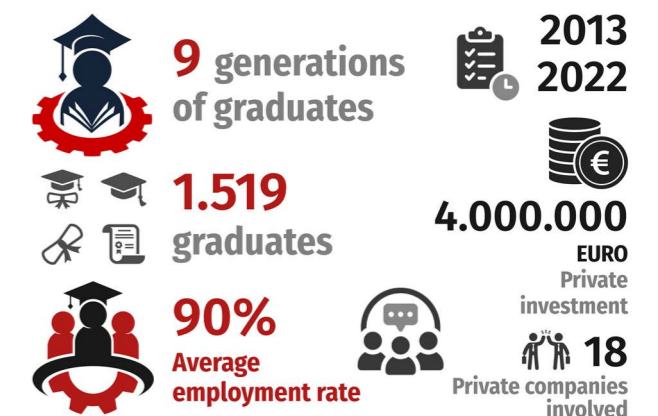
Through the *Exercise Company teaching method*, pupils develop entrepreneurial skills by simulating the internal processes occurring in a real company and the relations with other companies and institutions. The specialisation curriculum for the skills belonging to the economic specialisation contains modules assigned for entrepreneurial skills. Thus, pupils had the occasion to get in touch with the economic culture of the partners in the country and abroad.

During the academic year 2019-2020, 1,555 exercise companies/simulated companies were authorised, of which 462 new companies, 550 continued companies and 543 takeover companies, which carried out the current activity provided in the curriculum and extracurricular activities through the *Exercise Company teaching method*.

On the ROCT platform dedicated to vocational and technical education, extracurricular activities of 1,455 exercise companies/simulated companies, of which 689 new companies, 355 continued companies and 411 takeover companies, were registered for the current activity provided in the curriculum.

Local community contribution

The first vocational school in Romania, with a 10-year tradition, is the result of the partnership between Braşov Municipality, Braşov County School Inspectorate and the Non-governmental Association Fit for Future. This is a developing school, operating in dual system, currently having 762 pupils, 57 teachers, 19 partner-economic operators. The school's activity is based on a strong connection with the economic environment of Braşov county.



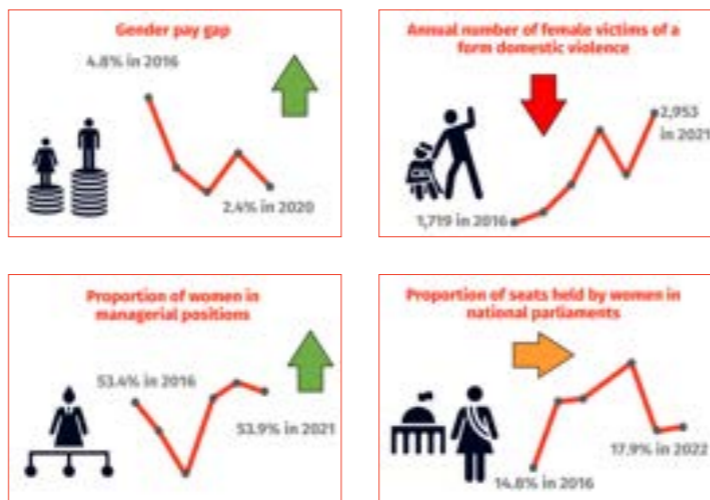
Results of the Professional German School Kronstadt
Data source: www.skg.ro



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Romania's goal

Prevent and combat the violence against women and girls, ensure balanced and effective participation of women and equality of opportunities in leadership positions at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life



Overview

In January 2022, Romania's population was 19,042,455 inhabitants, of which 51.4% were women. The gender pay gap decreased by 2.4% in 2020 compared to 2016, from 4.8% to 2.4%.

The domestic violence against women, represented by the number of adult female victims of domestic violence recorded by the administrative services, increased by 1024 cases, respectively by 59.57% in 2019 compared to 2016. The slight reduction of data in 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, may underestimate the domestic violence phenomena, by stopping victims from seeking social protection services.

On ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities in leadership positions at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, Romania made progress as regards the share of women in leadership positions. In 2021, in the central public administration, there were 714 leadership positions, at the decision-making level 1 and 2, with an occupation rate of 84.5%, 603 positions respectively. Of all positions, 325, 53.9% respectively, were occupied by women.

Gender equality, in terms of the participation in the political decision-making process at national level, reveals that, following the parliamentary elections carried out in 2020, 85 women obtained a mandate in the Romanian Parliament, of 466 parliamentarians, representing 18.24%.

Policies and measures

The *National Integrated Programme for the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence, Framework Methodology on the Organisation and Functioning of the National Innovative Integrated Network of Protected Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence* and the *National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence* were adopted in 2021.

The *National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence* was adopted in 2022.

Since 2018, by updating *Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence*, the Romanian Police has had the responsibility to issue provisional protection orders and the obligation to enforce them, and to supervise measures taken both through provisional protection orders and the protection orders issued by the courts.

Response to war in Ukraine

Following the war in Ukraine, in 2022, a large number of refugees, mostly women and children, transited Romania and faced the imminent risk of marginalisation. Language was one of the main obstacles related to their access to services and jobs, making it more difficult to provide immediate humanitarian aid.

In 2022, Romania implemented the *National Measure Plan* related to the protection and inclusion of displaced persons/refugees from Ukraine, who benefit from temporary protection in Romania. The refugees had access to official information about the rights, obligations and facilities made available by the Romanian Government.

The immediate response models were also provided by the civil society in Romania, by developing integrated services in Ukrainian and Russian, used by refugee women and children, and services for the victims of domestic, gender or sexual violence in the conflict areas. In 2022, no women and girls who were victims of violence or aggressors from Ukraine were identified.

Leave no one behind

In 2021, the tripartite protocol was signed between ANES, [ADRI](#) and [ROWL](#), to develop and implement actual and coherent actions and measures which are necessary to reduce the gender violence phenomenon and improve the quality of life of Romanian citizens who are in Italy. Protocol addresses the issues of women belonging to vulnerable groups, who are at risk in Italy, in terms of domestic violence, discrimination, sexual exploitation, work exploitation and human trafficking.

Actions are meant to limit and prevent the impact of migration, for work purposes, on transnational children and families. The protocol was activated during the COVID-19 period to facilitate the access of women who are victims of domestic violence, to services and information which are available in Romania and Italy during lockdown.

This Protocol supported the promotion of [Resolution 2366](#) *Impact of labour migration on "left-behind" children* of EU Parliamentary Assembly, in 2021, regarding the impact of economic migration on "left-behind" children at national level in Romania.

Challenges

- Lack of comprehensive data related to the extent and nature of physical, psychic and sexual violence against women is especially due to the fact that the aggressions are not reported due to fear, shame and fear of stigmatisation. Therefore, the measures to combat the phenomenon are not supported by solid proof, due to the lack of data
- Encouraging the culture of gender equality both in the family life and in all educational, economic, and societal activities, including at the level of companies, public services, and political life
- Increase the proportion of women among politicians through a better awareness of voters, but also of the parties appointing candidates. Change the mindset on the promotion of women in leadership positions by involving gender experts in the institutions

Next steps

The encouragement and support provided to victims of domestic violence and prevention of violence will be made through extensive awareness campaigns to avoid prejudices related to the division of activities, tasks and work in the family between "female" and "male", as well as displaying and instilling any other types of unequal behaviour.

To promote women in decision-making and national representation positions, it is necessary to enact a law providing measures to ensure balanced representation on the electoral lists for the election of senators and deputies, proportional to the gender distribution of the population at national and constituency level, related to the year before elections, except for those containing one candidate. In order to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes to be placed on eligible places on the lists of candidates, they should be ordered on the lists according to the principle of no more than two candidates of the same sex consecutively.

Local community contribution

Electronic Monitoring Information System SIME, operationalised in Bucharest, Iași, Mureș and Vrancea. The enforcement of 2021 Law on electronic monitoring in judicial and criminal enforcement proceedings, allowed for the SIME implementation in Romania, by means of devices of electronic surveillance of persons for whom legal measures are ordered. Since 1 October 2022, SIME operates in the pilot phase in the capital and 3 counties. The system shall be extended in all counties of the country by 2025.

The use of electronic systems allows for an increase in the degree to which measures to protect the rights of protected persons are ensured, but it is not a constraint measure, but a monitoring or surveillance method. SIME allows for monitoring compliance with measures ordered in judicial proceedings. The use of these systems is not equivalent to the protection of the physical integrity of the protected persons, but allows measures to be taken to prevent and counteract possible physical contact between the victim of domestic violence and the aggressor. SIME shall ensure the compliance with the rules imposed by the enforcement of house arrest and remote surveillance.

Monitoring is performed without human intervention, systematically and exclusively in Romania and ensures the confidentiality of the identity of the supervised person who is wearing the electronic device and the protected person or persons.

Civil society contribution

[GLORIA Project](#) - Integrated Support Granted to Victims of Domestic and Gender Violence. Having started in March 2021, the project provides integrated quality services, addressing domestic and gender-based violence in a multidisciplinary way, encompassing specific social, medical, educational, occupational and housing assistance measures for 550 persons, adults and children, who are victims of violence in rural and small urban areas in Iași, Vaslui, Bacău and Neamț Counties, covering 250 local communities where this type of services are missing or are not enough.

The project partners are the Centre for Mediation and Community Security Foundation, Corona Foundation and Hedda Association, an association which has experience in better practices in domestic violence in Norway. Being attracted in the project, ANES contributes to monitoring and informing all county and local institutions to implement the provisions of the [Istanbul Convention](#).

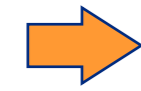
The project outcomes aim at supporting the victims of domestic and gender violence through the reception and emotional support service at forensic units, counselling to prevent and combat domestic violence - legal assistance and representation in court, psychological counselling, material assistance and support in crises, educational programmes - employment, training and information of population.



Counselling victims of violence
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Good practice

The partnership between SGG, INS and ROWL was signed in 2022 to periodically collect data and metadata of INDD 2030 set, as part of the SNDDR 2030 monitoring mechanism. A new indicator, ZBO0514 - Horizon 1 - Social: Proportion of seats held by women and men in national parliaments was built and introduced in the national statistic system. This indicator monitors the progress in fulfilling SDG 5 and is incorporated in the European Commission Priorities *An economy operating for people* and *A new impulse for European democracy*. The indicator may be deemed similar to the global indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women and men in national parliaments and local administrations.



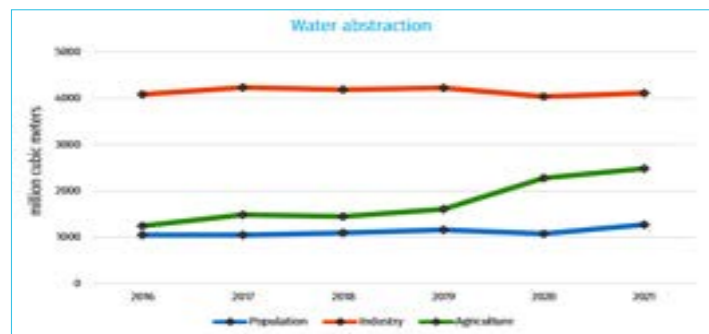
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Romania's goal

Increase the quality of life by developing the water, sewerage infrastructure and public service, bringing Romania into line with the EU requirements and standards in term of drinking water, wastewater, waste and increase the efficiency of the use of water in all sectors

Overview

From 2016 to 2021, the water resources in Romania recorded an annual average volume of 124.3 billion m³, of which the share of underground water represented 9.25% and surface water 90.75%. At national level, 97.65% for 3,025 bodies of surface water and 91.61% of 143 underground bodies of water are in a good chemical status.



Data source: ANAR

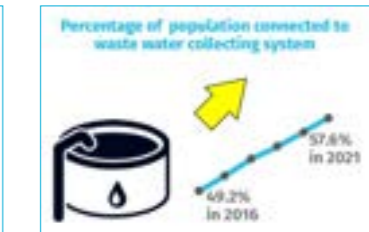
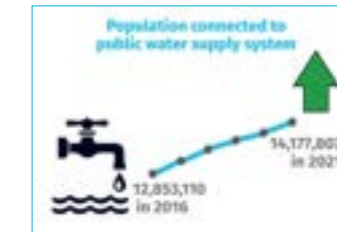
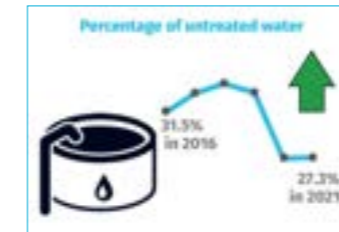
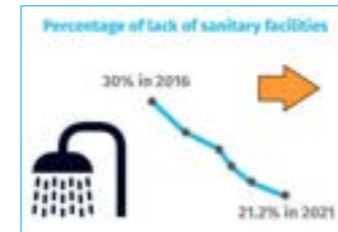
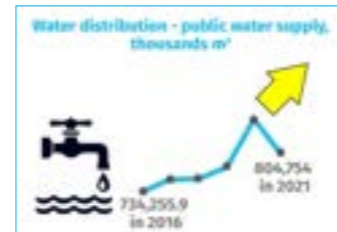
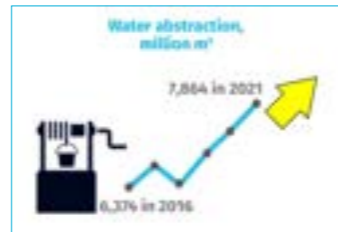
In 2021, the population connected to the public water supply system represented 74.1% of the resident population of Romania, increasing by 8.9% compared to 2016. In comparison, the connection to the sewerage system of only 57.6% of the population is increasing by 8.4% compared to 2016, of which 94.3% is the urban resident population.

The percentage of untreated water in all wastewater generated from 31.5% in 2016 to 27.3% in 2021 was found to be reduced.

The main water-consuming sectors were industry, agriculture, and human population.



Data source: ANAR



Furthermore, the share of persons without a bathroom/shower or even flush toilet in their house which was only 21.2% of the resident population in 2020, decreasing by 8.8 % compared to 2016 continues to be raised.

Policies and measures

Romania aligned with the main global and European strategic documents, transposing at national level the framework for Community action in the field of water policy [Directive 2000/60/EC](#), [Directive 2020/2184](#) on the quality of water intended for human consumption, [Directive 91/271/EEC](#) on urban wastewater treatment.

Water management is provided in the *Law of Water* and *Law on Water Supply and Sewerage*, regulating the public water supply and sewerage service organised at the level of communes, towns, cities, counties or intercommunity development associations.

Romania implements hydrographic basin management plans and flood risk management plans at the level of 11 Water Basin Administrations and Danube River, to manage and reduce the risk of flooding with effects on the population, economy, environment and cultural heritage, contributing to the improvement or preservation of

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

During the entire state of alert, May 2020 - March 2022 and for a subsequent period of 90 days, as a response to the pressure of restrictive measures taken during the pandemic, the viability of the approval for water-related works was extended by the *Law on certain measures to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic* approved in 2020, to facilitate further economic activities.

Leave no one behind

The Government created the legal framework for unrestricted access of the population vulnerable to poverty to quality water supply and sewerage/treatment services, through NRRP Component C1 - *Water Management*, Investment 3 - *Supporting the connection of low income population to the existing water supply and sewerage networks*, and the amount of €168 million was allocated to finance the connection of at least 88,400 households in the *National Programme First Connection to Water and Sewerage Systems*.



Expansion of the water and sewerage network in the Timișoara metropolitan area, Timiș county
 Source: [Romanian Association of Water](#)

Challenges

- Protect water resources is still a major priority, considering the need to extend household networks to access water, sewerage and sanitation, especially in the rural area
- Improve of water quality needs to decrease the untreated water percentage of the entire generated wastewater
- Accelerate the annual average, to increase rate to 4.41%, compared to 3.20%, as it was from 2016 to 2021, to reach the 2030 target
- Accelerate of annual average rate of the population in the rural area connected to the public water supply system, to reach the 90% target in 2030, by increased to 7.75% compared to 5.45%, as it was from 2016 to 2021
- Decrease the share of persons with no bathroom/shower or flush toilet inside the house, to reach the 1.5% target in 2030, accelerating the annual average increase rate to -23.3% compared to -8.3%, as it was from 2016 to 2021

Next steps

For the protection of water resources, the water supply of towns in the centralised system, construction/extension of sewerage and water treatment systems, with priority for the modernisation of rural communities, national non-reimbursable investment programmes are launched. "Anghel Saligny" Programme, with funds of €4.5 billion for the period 2021-2028 is coordinated by Ministry of Development, Public works and Administration. The 2021-2027 Sustainable Development Programme, in agreement with the EU goal for the preservation, protection and improvement of the environmental quality, Priority 1 Development of water and wastewater infrastructure and the transition to a circular economy allocates the amount of €3.4 billion, through ERDF, CF and national contribution.

Good practice

From 2019 to 2022, the initiative "Clean Waters" of MaiMultiVerde Association reunited town halls, community organisers and local associations, the National Administration "Romanian Waters" and volunteers for actions to clean the banks and water clarity, shoreline recreation and environmental education.



Floating barrier on the Jiu River, September 2021
 Source: [MaiMultiVerde Association](#)

4400 volunteers took part in 82 greening actions on the Danube banks and tributaries, where 334 tons of plastic were collected; equipping 9 sections of the banks of the Danube with separate collection systems, from which 230 tons of plastic were collected, and installing 5 floating barriers on the Cerna, Jiu, Olt, Buzău and Siret rivers, with the help of which 246 tons of plastic were collected. Other 65 community events organised in the riverside localities gathered about 6,000 persons, both inhabitants and tourists, when 15 water filtering system springs were installed in Zimnicea and Cernavodă towns, and 105 thematic film screenings were organised in high schools.

Local community contribution

"United Waters of Romania" is a project initiated in 2019, whereby Ivan Patzaichin Association - Mila 23 consolidates an alliance of organisations concerned with democratising access to water, participatory water management, promoting nature-based solutions, educating young people and valuing natural and cultural heritage. To increase the public interest in this regard, United Waters of Romania carried out awareness, education and activation actions, establishing the communities' emotional connection to water. More than 25,000 inhabitants in 40 towns took part in mini-festivals with the community water topic, where children found out how boats are built and what they can do to protect the waters.



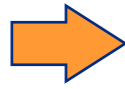
Mureș River, Alba County
 Source: Florin Duțulescu

"Romania's waters carry with them, towards the Danube and the Delta, the positive and negative energies of the places they cross and their people. A healthy, clean and well-managed river brings happiness, prosperity and contributes to the place identity .

A loved and maintained river is a gold medal !"

Ivan PATZAICHIN 1949-2021

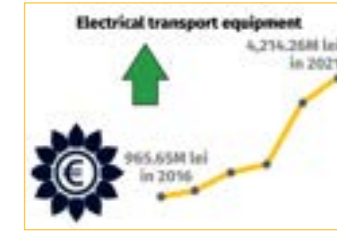
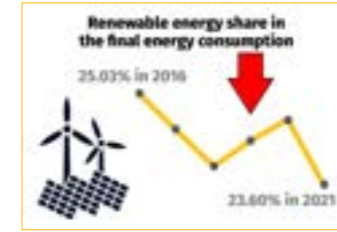
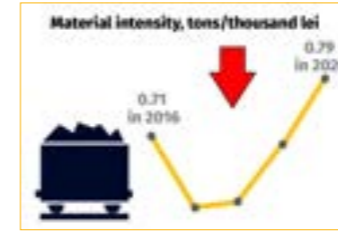
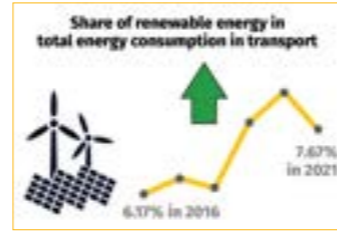
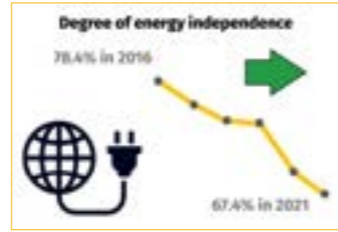
Multiple Olympic, world and European rowing champion



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Romania's goal

The Romanian energy sector needs to become economically more robust, technologically more advanced and flexible, and more environmentally friendly



share of electric traction vehicles was 0.07%, and that of hybrid traction vehicles was 0.44% of the total number of vehicles in Romania.



Fleet of electric buses for public transport, Pitesti, Argeş county
Source: Publitrans 2000 SA

Through the Multiannual National Programme on increasing energy efficiency for residential apartment buildings, by the end of 2020, approximately 5% of residential buildings were renovated from an energy point of view, with 4,827 buildings being rehabilitated throughout/between 2009-2021 period. In 2019, the final energy consumption in the building sector was 42% of total final energy consumption, of which 34% residential buildings and 8% commercial and public buildings. The residential sector had the highest share of energy consumption of about 81%, while for all other buildings, offices, schools, hospitals, shopping centres and other non-residential buildings was 19% of all final energy consumption.

Policies and measures

The National Incentive Programme for the Installing a Solar Photovoltaic Panel Systems to produce electricity in households, in order to cover the consumption needs and to deliver the surplus to the national network and the Green Homes Programme for the installation of heating systems using renewable energy, to increase energy efficiency and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and using renewable sources.

The Strategy of Energy has established the targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency and the prospect of implementation of European Green Deal by Romania.

National transposition of Directive 2009/28/EC created the legal framework to promote and extend the use of energy from renewable sources, which is an important component of the EU package of measures to reduce the greenhouse gases emissions. The National Integrated Plan on Energy and Climate Change 2021-2030 set out the national objectives and contributions to achieving the EU objectives on energy security, decarbonisation, energy efficiency, domestic energy market and research, innovation and competitiveness.

Romania has public policy and a legal framework in the field of energy performance of buildings, in accordance with the EU Directive 2018/844, which aims to achieve the 2050 decarbonisation goal for the building

stock. The National Long-Term Renovation Strategy and Action Plan for the 2022-2030 phase and the roadmap with measures and measurable progress indicators with indicative steps for 2030, 2040 and 2050 were drawn up. Since 2020, the Programme for carrying out works to increase energy efficiency in single-family dwellings, beneficiaries-individuals and from 2021 the Programme for increasing energy performance and smart energy management in public buildings have been implemented.

Challenges

- Accessibility to energy and price sustainability
- Increase the share of energy from renewable sources in the final gross consumption at 30.7%
- Extend the level of in-depth renovation and eligible measures for obtaining public funding
- Develop the university and post-graduate programmes for continuous professional training related to "nearly zero energy building" renovation

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

In order to facilitate the National Programme on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Transports, by promoting energy-efficient road transport vehicles, in 2020 the Administration of the Environment Fund adapted to the restrictive conditions to combat COVID-19 diseases. Thus, the participation of applicants who were legal persons to the Rabla Plus Programme was carried out only by online mail. 88 applications have been approved for funding, in total 49 hybrid electric cars and 112 purely electric cars, worth approx. €1.2 million.

Leave no one behind

Romania ranks first regarding the rate of increase of electricity prices in the EU, by 25% in August 2021 compared to August 2020, compared to the EU average of 9.3% and ranks 10th in terms of natural gas price increase, with 20.5% in August 2021 compared to August 2020, compared to the EU average of 14.2%.

The Romanian Government adopted measures to support the categories of vulnerable persons to compensate the energy price by capping prices and compensate energy bills from 1 November 2021 to 31 March 2022 and temporary energy support measures for the same period.

To compensate the increase of the fuel price, which impacted the standards of living for population and the activity of the economic operators, the Government granted discounts for gas and diesel prices by €0.1/litre, VAT included, at the selling price.

Next steps

In order to meet the RES - Renewable energy sources targets, Romania will implement policies and measures meant to reduce the energy consumption and encourage the use of RES in relevant sectors: heating and cooling, electricity and transports, maximising synergies between the actions of the Strategy of Energy and the Integrated National Plan for Energy and Climate Changes by 2030.

To reduce the specific energy consumption in residential sector, it is necessary to review the technical construction regulations to stimulate the thorough renovation of existing buildings, including regular reviews and updates of energy performance standards, based on the total cost optimization methodology.

The increase in the energy efficiency of heritage buildings is provided in the intervention methodology for non-invasive approach of energy efficiency in buildings of historic and architectural value and aims to create a framework for intervention to optimise the energy performance of buildings of historic and architectural value through non-invasive methods and approaches.

Good practices

In recent years, Engie Romania and Habitat for Humanity Romania have developed a partnership aiming to rehabilitate a number of buildings belonging to non-governmental organisations and educational institutions to reduce the energy consumption and implicitly the energy-related costs. Thus, the energy rehabilitation of more than half of SOS Children's Villages buildings in Bucharest and the installation of a photovoltaic panel system with energy storage and grid injection, which has the potential to cover a significant percentage of the energy consumption of the entire complex and the accreditation of the organisation as a prosumer were performed, SOS Children's Villages in Bucharest becoming an energy efficient social community.

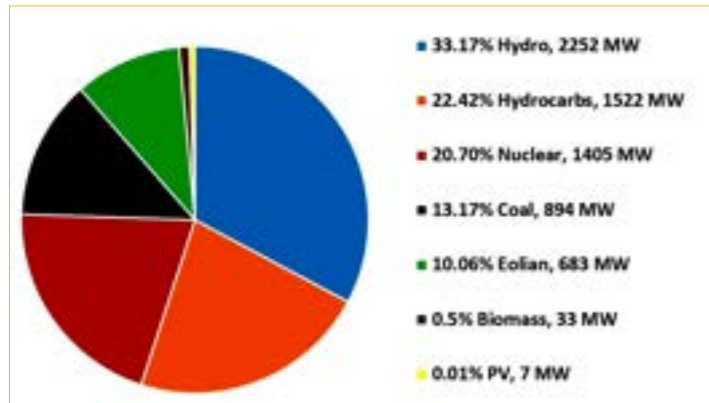
Also, Buhnici House is an example of best practices, being the first premium passive house in Eastern Europe, included in the top 10 passive houses in the world in 2018, being equipped with cutting-edge technologies, HVAC system, photovoltaic solar panels and others. At the same time, Buhnici House is the first electricity prosumer registered in Romania.



Buhnici House
Source: https://green-electric.ro/?page_id=1593

Overview

Romania owns balanced and diversified mixed energy, benefitting from important internal resources, distributed in the entire country.



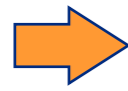
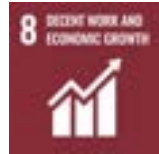
Romania's energy mix
Data source: Transelectrica

Electricity is the most accessible form of energy in Romania, with a household connection rate more than 90% followed by the proportion connected to natural gas of about 44%. The length of natural gas distribution pipes showed an increase by 14.6% in 2021, 45.4 thousand km respectively, compared to 2016. In Romania, the energy independence in 2021 was 67.4%.

Final energy consumption increased in 2021 by 15.2% compared to 2016, reaching 25.3 million tonnes of oil equivalent. The share of energy from renewable sources in the final energy consumption was 23.6% in 2021, decreasing by 1.4% compared to 2016.

In Romania, the environmental performance in the transport sector showed an increase by 7.7% in 2021, by 1.5% compared to 2016. The production value of electric and more resource-efficient transport equipment increased from 965.7 million lei in 2016, to 4,214.26 million lei in 2021.

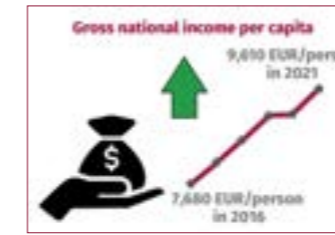
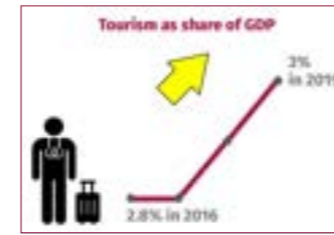
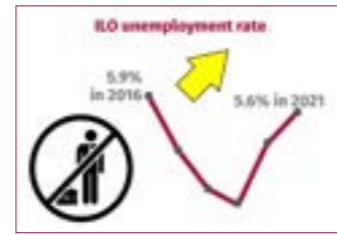
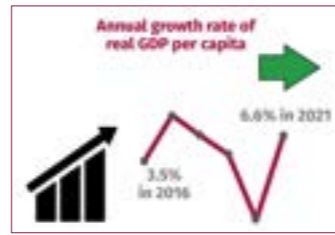
The Rabla Programmes, the car fleet renewal program at the national level, have encouraged the imports and purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles for the public transport and personal cars, and have culminated in 2021 with the registration of 6,903 electric vehicles and 38,531 hybrid vehicles, which led to a total of 26,277 electric vehicles were registered in 2022. Their number continues to remain low compared to the number of registered classic traction vehicles, the



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Romania's goal

Economic growth, promote entrepreneurship, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainable tourism, create decent jobs including for young people and persons with disabilities and access to funding



The Strategy for the Development of Spa Tourism and Strategy for the Development of Ecotourism have created conditions for expansion into protected natural areas and neighbouring areas, by developing a network of recognised ecotourism destinations and by the development of competitive ecotourism products.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the hospitality industry. In 2020, support measures were adopted as grants amounting to 20% of the turnover difference in 2019 compared to 2020, within the limit of €800,000 per enterprise. Through this state aid scheme, non-reimbursable financing was granted to a number of approximately 8,300 beneficiaries, total aids being about €430 million. In addition to this state aid scheme, the enterprises could also access grants of max €150,000, for working capital, and 40% were beneficiaries in hospitality industry, representing 6,872 approved applications. During the pandemic, certain exemptions from the payment of the specific tax established for tourist facilities and measures to stimulate tourism demand by granting holiday vouchers to employees in the budgetary sector were implemented, amounting to about €300 on a yearly basis, until 31 December 2026.

Leave no one behind

Liberalisation of energy prices caused imbalances in the costs of products and services, which led at national level to support measures for people at risk of material deprivation and/or at risk of extreme poverty in 2022, by granting vouchers worth approx. €50 for the purchase of food and hot meals, every 2 months, during May - December. More than 2.5 million persons from vulnerable categories benefited: pensioners, severely or moderately disabled people, families with at least 2 dependent children and single-parent families with a net monthly income per family member of €120, families who have established entitlement to social assistance, homeless people.

Challenges

- Mitigate the rate of inflation, which reached its highest in recent years in November 2022, when consumer prices rose by 16.76%/year
- Increase the economic growth recovery through lowering the interest rates and improving the external outlooks. EC estimates an actual GDP increase of 2.5% in 2023 and 3.0% in 2024, while the National Strategy and Forecasting Commission expects 2.8%, 4.8% respectively
- Collaboration of institutions, authorities and social partners for the integration on the labour market of inactive persons who are able to work, young people, including NEETs2 young people and extension of active life of elders
- Development of destination management organisations, digitalisation of tourist information services, attracting tourism and cultural labour

Next steps

Creating new jobs and green jobs with a focus on competitiveness sectors, by stimulating entrepreneurship, developing skills of workforce to ensure a quality employment in competitive sectors shall be supported by the measures of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Employment.

Youth Guarantee is the measure that shall ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality job offer, further education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

For categories of people at risk of material deprivation and/or at risk of extreme poverty, temporary measures shall continue to provide financial support through vouchers and financial aid, through the Operational Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme related to the programme period 2021-2027 and Operational Program Helping Disadvantaged Persons.

Local community contribution

Sighişoara is the only inhabited medieval city in the Southern-Eastern Europe from UNESCO heritage. For the economic growth and town visibility, important events are organised every year to promote culture, local crafts and culinary arts, attracting tourists from all over the world: Sighişoara Medieval Festival, Harmony of the Citadel Festival, ProEtnica Inter-ethnic Festival, Sighişoara Blues Festival, Brass Bands Festival, National Medieval Theatre Festival for Youth.



Sighişoara Medieval Festival, Sighişoara, Mureş county
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Business sector contribution

Between 2018-2021, Bethany Social Services Foundation in Timişoara implemented the Start-up, Stand-up! Project, co-funded through European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme to encourage entrepreneurship in urban areas and self-employment in the Western Region. The outreach activities aimed at minimum 3,000 persons in the urban areas of the Western region as regards the opportunities existing in the field of entrepreneurship, development of an entrepreneurship training programme for minim 300 persons intending to establish a non-agricultural business in the urban area and supporting minim 36 non-agricultural entrepreneurial initiatives. The project is among 14 successful projects funded through operational programmes related to 2014-2020 programme period in the Gala "Romania modernised with European funds" being a promotor of sustainable and quality jobs and the supporter of workers' mobility, thus contributing to the increase of employment level by supporting non-agricultural profile enterprises in the urban area.

Good practice

The Câmpia Turzii industrial park, with an area of 10 ha and with investors and private investments of over €100 million, was developed through a project started in 2016. Among the industrial objectives of the park is the largest cold storage in Transylvania, production hall for components for the furniture industry, large capacity plant, greenfield production halls, etc. The investments generated an increase in jobs in Cluj County and the surrounding areas.



Câmpia Turzii Industrial Park, Cluj county
Source: <https://turdanews.net/>



Build resilient infrastructures, promote sustainable inclusive industrialisation and foster innovation

Romania's goal

Develop safe and sustainable infrastructure, modernise technological capacities of industrial sectors, foster innovations and increase the number of employees working in research

Overview

Major investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure and optical fibre networks with average uploading speed of more than 100 Mbps, made Romania an example to be followed.

The transport infrastructure includes airports, road, rail, ship and intermodal terminal networks. The road network is about 86,000 km long. The share of modernized roads in the national network witnessed a 7.7 p.p. increase from 2016 to 2021, reaching 47.1%. The road traffic death rate has decreased from 11.6 deaths to 100,000 inhabitants in 2016, to 10.7 in 2021, being among the highest at the EU level.

The value added in manufacturing industry as share of GDP decreased by 3.6 p.p. compared to 2016, to 16.5% in 2021. In 2021, the manufacturing industry workforce was 17.1% as share of total workforce, decreasing by 1.5 p.p. compared to 2016.

In 2021, the number of researchers involved in the RDI activity was 1,004 at 1 million inhabitants, increasing by 10% compared to 2016, and the ratio of expenditure allocated to RDI activity in the public sector at the national level, relative to the GDP value was decreasing from 0.21% in 2016 to 0.19% in 2021.

Policies and measures

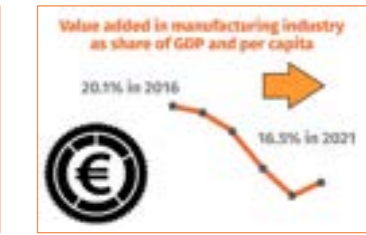
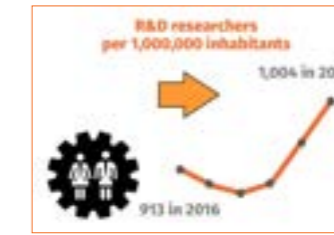
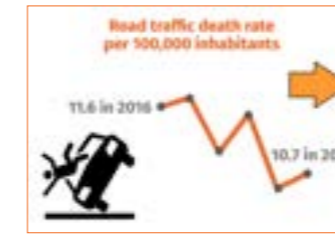
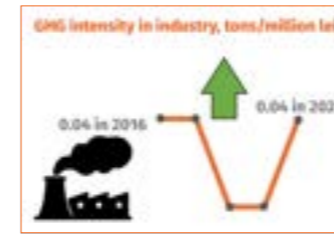
In 2016, the *General Master Transport Plan*, was designed as the blueprint for the development of the transport network. This comprehensive plan was later complemented by specific programs managed by the National Road Infrastructure Company, focusing on enhancing transport infrastructure in rural areas, as well as the construction and modernization of highways and national roads. Strategic programs have been implemented to enhance the infrastructure of the aviation sector, specifically focusing on airport development. Romania takes part in the *Single European Sky ATM Research 3 Joint Undertaking Programme - Single European Sky* to implement the navigation procedures based on performance.

To stimulate the development of a career in RDI field, changes were made to the *Fiscal Code* for tax exemption, and the legislative framework allowing the increase in the maximum salary ceiling has been created in the RDI projects up to €50/hour.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the acceleration of digitalisation in Romania, having an impact on certain fields, such as public services, healthcare, education, governing and trade.

In the healthcare sector, the pandemic has driven an increase in the demand for digital healthcare solutions, such as telemedicine and



online appointment services. In 2020, the protection measures taken in the epidemiologic risk situation led to the supplementation of the *Health Reform Law* allowing the development of telemedicine platforms. The purpose of such platforms is to facilitate remote medical services, without the need for the physical presence of the medical staff and the patient, to determine the diagnosis, indicate the treatment, monitor illnesses or indicate disease prevention methods, in a secure manner, through information technology and electronic means of communication.

Leave no one behind

The migration of youth with intellectual potential makes the Romanian human capital in RDI field vulnerable. In 2019, Romania was ranked 55th out of 141 of other countries at international level in terms of innovation and 53rd in research and development. Extra-curricular participation of pupils in the secondary education and/or non-university tertiary education or students in international competitions with an obvious technical and scientific component, which is favourable to the transition to understanding a RDI project, is carried out almost exclusively on a voluntary basis and on individual initiative, at the level of educational establishments, research organisations or non-governmental institutions using their own budgets.

To ensure a critical mass of young people wanting a career in research, in 2022, MRID launched a research career publicity campaign among pupils and students, through the *Henri Coandă Programme* for funding the participation of young people in the technical and scientific competitions and rewarding the results obtained in such competitions.

The expected changes in the mindset of pupils and students, by implementing the programme refer to: stimulating the interest in research, science and digitalisation by early taking part in RDI activities; developing the team work abilities and skills and the abilities and skills necessary to carry out RDI activities; creating a legal framework required to form a new generation open to knowledge at international level; increasing the number of Romanian young people wanting to stay and carry out RDI activities in Romania, after they benefited from research scholarships.

Challenges

- Simplification of procedures for approving transport infrastructure extension, modernisation and interconnection projects
- Significant reduction in number of road accidents
- Stopping brain drain and ensuring the conditions to develop a research career in Romania
- Increase in RDI investments, acceleration of know-how transfer and technological transfer

Next steps

The *National Strategy of Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation* is directed to the development of Romania through research and innovation. The strategy's main objectives include: increase in financing for research and innovation, increase in cooperation between researchers and companies, stimulation of technological transfer, development of digital skills and artificial intelligence, supporting the entrepreneurship and start-ups, and sustainable development and environmental protection.

The *Action programme for development of railway infrastructure and modal transfer to the railway of the passenger transport flows and goods* shall continue the modernisation and extension of the existing railway network, the increase of railway transport performances, the development of facilities and services for passengers and operators, and the promotion of modal transfer to the railway by various incentives. The development process of Henri Coandă International Airport shall be accelerated, and the implementation of the navigation concept based on performance shall continue in 16 Romanian airports.

Road safety is a public health problem in Romania and, the implementation of the *Strategy of national road safety* aims to significantly reduce the number of road accidents and their consequences, by 2030, by improving the road safety management system, the road infrastructure and vehicles, by promoting safer vehicles, and by ensuring safer areas for pedestrians and cyclists.

The *National Plan of RDI* is stimulated until 2027, the public and private investments in RDI, the transfer of technology and innovation between the public and private sector, the improvement of infrastructure by modernisation and endowment of INCD, the increase in the number of researchers and the improvement of the working conditions for them by developing interdisciplinary research projects and by promoting the career in research.

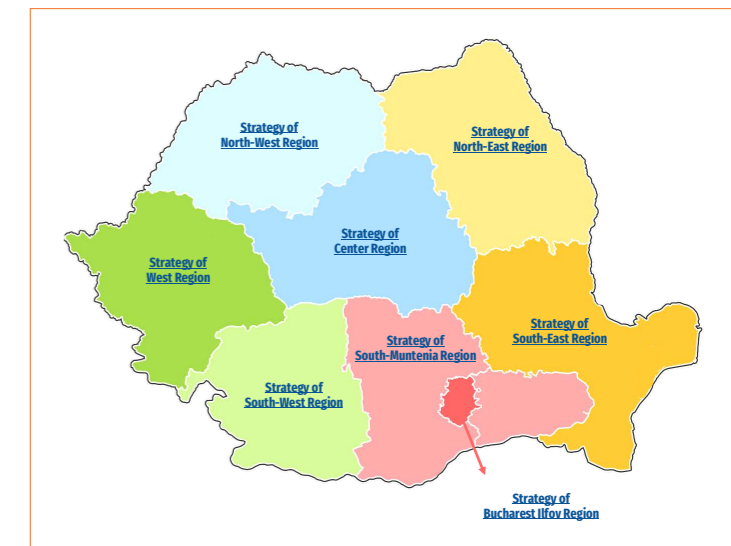
Good practice

The *National Strategy of Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation, 2022 - 2027* is the programme document designing the vision for the RDI system, supporting excellence, rewarding performance, and enabling public-private collaboration. It supports the achievement of target 9.5 set out in Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030: Boost scientific research and modernise the technological capacity of the industrial sectors; encourage innovation and significantly increase the number of employees in research and development and increase public and private spending on research and development.

The *National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation* has been drafted in close correlation with all 8 regional smart specialisation strategies which are under the coordination of the Regional Development Agencies and which identify the priority

intervention sectors and contribute to the increase in the regional economic competitiveness by maximising the identified research and innovation potential.

The strategy is multi-yearly supported by about €12 billion for the period 2022-2027, structured on 10 financing programmes aiming at the concentration and connection of excellence at the scientific border, in agreement with the societal challenges; broad mobilisation of businesses towards innovation; supporting the development of local, regional and national innovation ecosystems associated with smart specialisations to support advancement in global value-added chains; European and international cooperation.



Smart specialization strategies for Romania's 8 development regions with access links
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

"Research and innovation must be the tip of the spear for the development of Romania. The document adopted today by the Government is more than a simple strategy; it is, in fact, an economic growth vision of the country based on the high-added value investments and accelerated productivity. We emphasise meritocracy, the recognition of individual researchers' and research organisations' performance based on objective assessments, with transparent indicators and criteria. ... At the same time, this strategy brings opening to a partnership with the private sector and internationalisation. ... We want Romania to be a clear option on the world research map. Last but not least, a key milestone of this vision is the transfer of technology, know-how and innovation to the Romanian private sector".

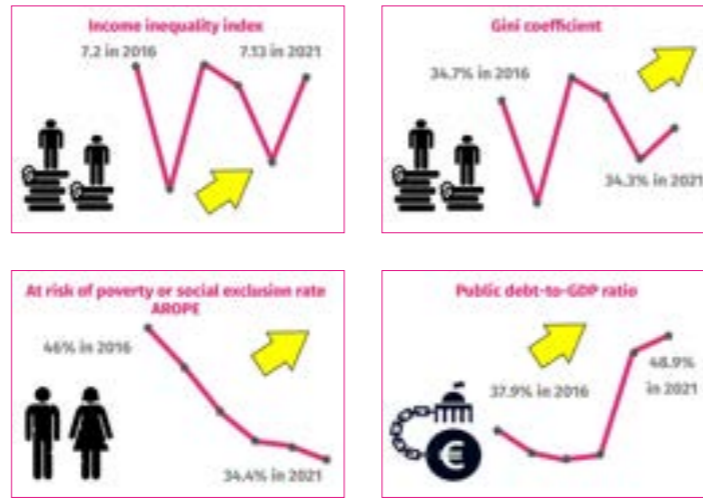
Sebastian BURDUJA
Minister of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation



Reduce inequalities within and among countries

Romania's goal

Reduce disparities, eliminate discriminations in all its forms and promote progressive policies for the achievement of a fair equality, especially in terms of taxation, salary levels, education and social protection



evolution between 2016-2021 highlighted that the less developed regions, an insignificant increase has been registered in relation to the national average, which reveals the need to step up efforts in reducing disparities among regions.

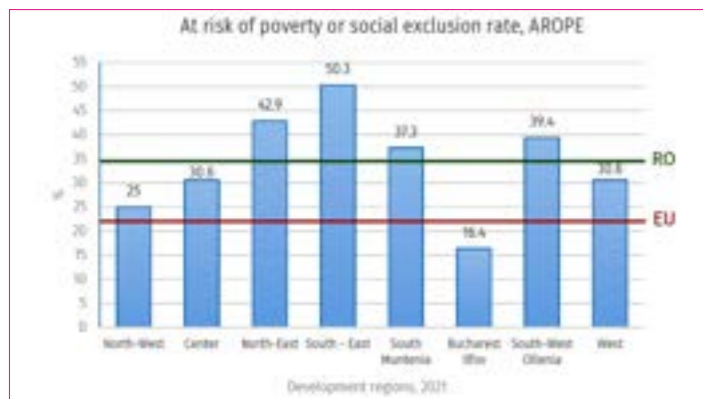
In 2022, 47.7% of the population was living in the countryside and 52.3% in the urban areas. Although the monthly average total income for a household increased in the rural area, on an average from €540 in 2016 to €920 in 2021, the rural-urban income disparity has doubled in the same period of time, from about €200 to approximately €400. The disparities between regions and the inequality of the salary level in rural-urban areas have led to labour migration phenomenon in other regions within Romania or in Europe, with a visible effect in the depopulation of villages or small towns.

Besides the residence, the income inequalities can also be noticed by age groups. In 2021, the rate of young people neither in employment nor in education or training was 18.0%, with 0.6 p.p. higher than in 2016.

Policies and measures

The investments in rural areas were especially supported by the *National Rural Development Programme* which facilitated obtaining financing from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and complies with the strategic rural development guidelines of the European Union. From 2014 to 2021, €93,875,487 were allocated to fund farmers and entrepreneurs from the rural area, targeting investments in agricultural and fruit-growing holdings, investments for processing and for agricultural and fruit-growing products marketing, investments in developing of non-agricultural activities.

Integrated Territorial Investments were a financial instrument of EC during the 2014-2020 financial programming period in order to stimulate the integrated territorial development. The *2021-2027 Partnership Agreement* included the use of integrated territorial investments for microregions Danube Delta, Valea Jiului, Moții - Țara de Piatră and Țara Făgărașului. These funds were designed to the persons directly affected by the process of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by losing jobs, to those who are indirectly affected by the green transition due to improper or insufficiently adequate skills, to young people up to age of 29, people over 55, women, single-parent family members, members of ethnic minorities and to people who fall into the categories of disadvantaged workers, severely disadvantaged workers and workers with disabilities.



Data source: INS, Eurostat

Another dimension of the economic inequality between regions was illustrated by the average net income per household. While in Bucharest-Ilfov region, in 2021, the indicator value was €1,737, in the least developed region it was almost half, €937. The

Response to war in Ukraine

The invasion started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine brought a new challenge for Romania regarding inequalities: a wave of more than 3.2 million Ukrainian refugees who entered/crossed the border to Romania until December 2022. Of them, more than 2.5 million received direct support. At the end of 2022, there were over 100,000 Ukrainian citizens who chose to stay in Romania. The Romanian Government and the civil society allocated resources to ensure the basic needs, both for the protection and inclusion of refugees. More than €500 million were allocated from the state budget and the international partners, more than 20 laws were enacted or amended regarding the management of persons displaced from Ukraine, more than 1,500 local authorities and 300 non-governmental organisations were involved in the provision of direct support granted to Ukrainian refugees. In addition to ensuring the basic needs and access to health and education services, a [digital platform](#) was also developed to easily access information to help the inclusion of Ukrainians.

Leave no one behind

There are approximately 569,500 Roma people in Romania, according to the 2022 Census, the second largest national minority. In fact, the Roma population might be larger, as sociologists noted the tendency for Roma people to avoid declaring their ethnicity in the Census.

According to a *report of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights*, most of Roma people in Romania live in overcrowded places, leave school since children and are exposed to the risk of poverty. For example, the at-risk-of-poverty rate of Roma children exposed to the risk of poverty increased from 2016 to 2021, from 78% to 79%, while the percentage for children among general population is 30%. The Romanian Government implements measures to support the reducing of inequalities faced by the Roma people. Besides the general measures related to combating discrimination and the rights granted for maternal language education, in 2011 the National Education Law introduced a measure that grants Roma candidates the right to benefit from a number of guaranteed places from the state budget. Therefore, at the beginning of each school year, high schools, vocational schools and higher education institutions offer places for which only Roma can apply.

Challenges

- Besides/along external migration, Romania also faces internal migration, among regions, given the fact that economic growth is rather unevenly distributed. A challenge for our country is to combat and prevent entering a vicious circle - people leave lesser developed areas to obtain economic welfare in the more developed regions, and the poorer regions are less likely to reduce poverty as they face a shortage of well-trained force labour. Considering that the regions with poor economic performance are not attractive for investors, it is a challenge for the national authorities to redirect investments in sustainable industrialisation
- Improvement of the young people neither in employment nor in education or training situation

Next steps

The *National Regional Programmes 2021-2027* are the main financial instruments that Romania can access at EU level for the cohesion with the Community and the mitigation of disparities between regions.

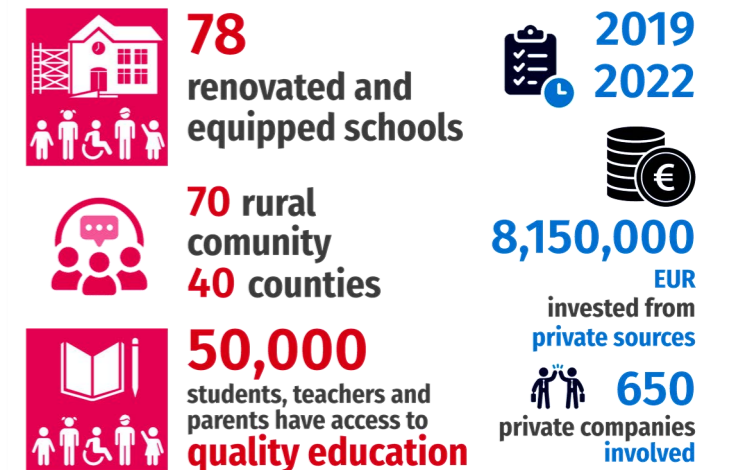
Through the *Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027*, 8 *Regional Operational Programmes* and the priority axes reflecting the development vision have been approved to reduce the gaps between and within the regions which aim the financing for: competitiveness, innovation, digitalisation and dynamic enterprises; Smart cities; environmentally friendly cities; development of central heating systems; accessibility; education; attractiveness from a touristic and economical point of view.

The *National Employment Strategy* supports the valorisation of young people's economic potential, including NEET, by increasing the employment rate and promoting sustainable employment among young people, inclusively by implementing the reinforced *Youth Guarantee*.

In order to support the Roma people and to ensure the necessary framework for them to reach their maximum potential, the Romanian Government adopted the *Strategy for Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority*. The strategy highlights five main objectives: improving housing conditions and infrastructure in vulnerable Roma communities; ensuring access of Romanian Roma citizens to inclusive quality education; boosting Roma employment in line with labour market requirements, so as to avoid the segmentation of skills and opportunities and allow their professional evolution; improving the state-health of vulnerable Roma communities members; supporting research, preservation and promoting the Roma cultural heritage and identity.

Public-private partnership

Together We BUILD People represents hundreds of campaigns supported by the private sector, local authorities, teachers-parents-pupils who, at the initiative of the [BookLand Association](#) united their efforts to contribute to the renovation and endowment of schools in villages. Being representative for Romania, this public-private partnership supports the reducing of school drop-out in rural area, providing the pupils the chance to quality education in safe, modern and friendly buildings offering a perspective for a sustainable community. The exemplary and effective mobilisation has led to dozens of renovated and equipped rural schools, thousands of children per year who willingly come to school, better school performances and the premises for a fulfilled life with long-term impact.



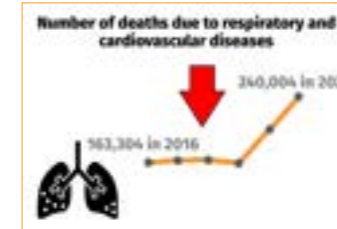
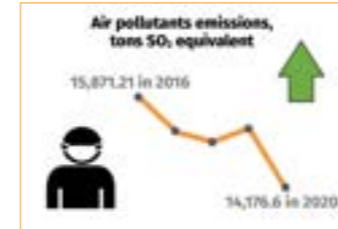
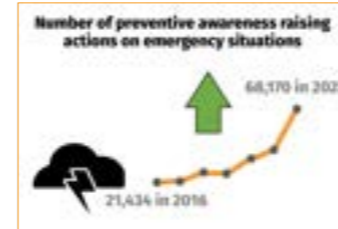
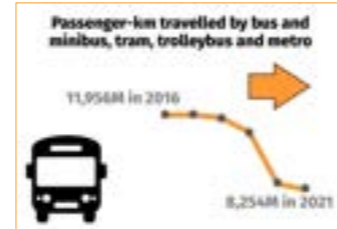
Results of the Project We BUILD People Together
Data source: <https://book-land.ro/>



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Romania's goal

ensure the decent living conditions for citizens in urban and rural communities by accessing safe and affordable housing and basic services, consolidate efforts to protect and safeguard cultural heritage, reduce negative environmental impacts in towns and cities



2021. Practically, 470 Smart City projects have been currently completed in Romania. Taken together, the district city halls of the Capital and the general city hall of the Capital are the clear national leader, with 115 projects.

Policies and measures

To support local public authorities, for sustainable territorial development, programmes were developed for the elaboration and/or update of general urban planning and local planning regulations, for financing from the state budget of natural risk maps for earthquakes and landslides, for construction of social housing, including rental housing for young people, service housing and social housing for Roma communities.

In order to increase the resilience of communities in risk situations, annual action programmes related to the design and execution of intervention works were implemented to decrease the seismic risk, such as the *National Plan for Disaster Risk Management* and the *National Programme for Increasing the Energy Performance of Residential Buildings*.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

In order to prevent and combat the effects of the pandemic, from March to May 2020, temporary measures were ordered to protect public health, simultaneously with the limitation or interruption of non-essential social and economic activities throughout the territory, including by limiting the exercise of a number of fundamental rights and freedoms, without which the other undertaken actions could not have had the desired effect. In 2020, the National Centre for Intervention Coordination and Management, an interinstitutional body for the continuous operational management of emergency situations during the pandemic, was operationalised. Subsequently, with the improvement of understanding of the way in which SARS-CoV-2 was spreading and its contamination effects, gradual and area measures influenced by the epidemiologic situation were taken, so as to ensure the protection of the rights to life, physical integrity and protection of health.

The measures were divided into three levels: increase in the response capacity, ensuring the communities' resilience and reducing the impact of the type of risk. They aimed at the following fields: economic, health, labour and social protection, transports and infrastructure, education and research, youth and sports, culture and cults, insolvency and justice.

During the pandemic, the Inspectorates for Emergency Situations conducted 385,426 specific missions: 15,005 transports of persons suspected of being infected, 61,756 transports of confirmed infected persons, 2,275 transports/distributions of protection equipment and means of intervention, 10,861 qualified first aid missions for persons suspected of being infected, 83,373 personnel, intervention equipment and buildings decontamination missions, as well as 212,156 other missions related to COVID-19: transport of samples, installation of tents, arrangement, operationalisation and administration of temporary facilities for isolation and treatment of confirmed patients, etc.

Leave no one behind

The public services offered by institutions responsible with the management of emergency situations were provided free of charge, in a non-discriminatory manner, by a specialised network of units and subunits covering the entire national territory. During the pandemic, at the level of territorial administrative units, the Public Health Directorates permanently operated, which in collaboration with the Inspectorates for Emergency Situations managed all calls received from the population.

Challenges

- Increasing the resilience of communities to disasters, including seismic risk
- Providing quality services, especially in rural areas
- Improving the housing stock, public spaces and air quality
- Conservation and rehabilitation of historic residential buildings and cultural monuments

Next steps

In order to overcome the challenges and reach the proposed objectives, the action plans for the *Strategy of Housing* until 2025, the *Integrated Urban Development Strategy for Resilient, Green, Inclusive and Competitive Cities* until 2035, the *Strategy of Seismic Risk Reduction*, the *Strategy of Historic Monuments Protection* until 2030, the *Strategy of Medium and Long Term Flood Risk Management* until 2035, the *National Management Plan of Disaster Risk*, and the *National Programme of Air Pollution Control* shall be implemented.

Good practices

Romania is one of the first EU member states implementing the project UNESCO Culture Indicators|2030, an important step for measuring and monitoring the progress of cultural contribution to the SDG implementation at national and local level. The indicators may provide a valuable contribution to Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, and to the future sectoral strategy in the field of culture, currently under development by the Ministry of Culture, in partnership with the National Institute for Research and Cultural Training. The set includes indicators related to multilingual education, cultural participation, combating illicit traffic of mobile cultural goods.

The proposed indicators also include indicators 11.4.1 and 4.7.1 of Agenda 2030. In order to obtain the information necessary to calculate the indicators, the data at national level publicly provided by the following authorities and public institutions has been taken into consideration: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social

Protection/Labour Inspection, Ministry of Education/National Authority for Qualifications, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Institute of Statistics, National Heritage Institute, Department for Interethnic Relations, National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, National Bank of Romania, National Civil Servants Agency.

The project *UNESCO Culture Indicators|2030* reflects the commitment of 150 states, assumed by the Mondiacult Declaration in Mexico, in 2022, for a common roadmap to strengthen policies in the field of culture. Romania supports the need to coordinate, consolidate and develop instruments and mechanisms to analyse, monitor and measure the impact of culture on sustainable development in an integrated manner, as emphasized in Art. 20 of the Declaration.

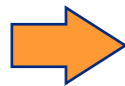


UNESCO Culture Indicators |2030
Source: UNESCO/Juan Luis M. Acevez

Romania has become an important international assistance provider in the field of civil protection by granting emergency external humanitarian aid to manage crisis situations generated by earthquakes, within the European Civil Protection Mechanism. As a result of the earthquake in Albania, Romania granted material assistance and supported the national authorities with a team specialised in urban search & rescue operations.



Urban search and rescue team
Source: Department of Sustainable Development



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Romania's Goal

Implement circular economy principles, boosting of resource productivity and a reduction in food loss and waste, promote sustainable public procurement practices, encourage companies to report the sustainability of activities

Overview

Romania established the strategic vision related to the transition from the linear economic model with a high consumption of resources, to the efficient circular model in terms of resources, wastes, and green public procurement directed to sustainability.

In 2020, in order to produce a GDP unit, six times more material resources than at EU level were used. The rate of improvement in material resource productivity decline, recorded during the period 2016-2020, hindered by the severe decrease by 5.1% of the number of employees in the sector of goods and environmental services, was supported by the increase by 83.3% of the GVA share from the environmental technologies to GDP. The productivity of material resources recorded the lowest value of 1.27 thousand lei/ton in 2020. A continuous progress was recorded for the responsible use of energy resources where the energy productivity reached the maximum limit of €5.3/kg equivalent to the oil in 2020.

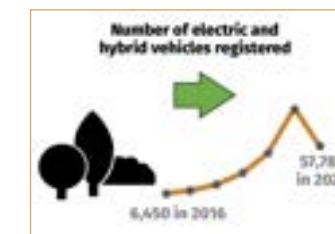
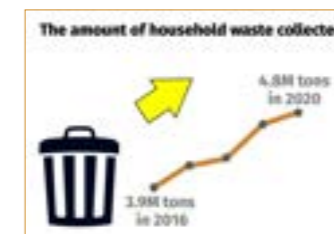
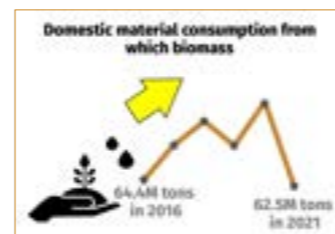
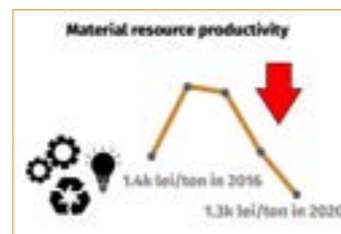
The amount of waste has been on a downward trend, in 2020 being 141 million tons, 7.3 tons per inhabitant respectively, compared to 177 million tons in 2016. The total quantity of collected household waste increased to 4.8 million tons in 2020 compared to 3.8 million in 2016. The total amount of household waste collected increased to 4.8 million tonnes in 2020, up from 3.8 million tonnes in 2016, and also in 2020 the recycling rates were 39.9% for packaging waste and 11.9% for municipal waste. The 2030 targets of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy set the following waste recycling thresholds: 70% for packaging waste and 60% for municipal waste.

The circularity rate of materials in 2021 was only 1.4% compared to 1.7% in 2016. In the effort to reduce food waste, 20 recipient operators complying with the regulations related to the safety of foodstuffs were recorded in 2021, implementing the circular economy practices.

Policies and measures

Since 2005, the Government has established mandatory extended producer liability schemes for all packaging materials. The *National Waste Management Strategy* and *National Waste Management Plan* have set a target of halving per capita food waste by 2030, recycling 55% of municipal waste by 2025, recycling 65% of packaging waste by 2025, separately collecting dangerous household waste by 2022, biological waste by 2023 and textiles by 2025.

The *Food Waste Reduction Law* has established since 2016 accountability measures to reduce the food waste in the agri-food chain, including food transfer measures by donation. *Green Purchase*



Law introduced a first regulation of the minimum requirements related to the low impact on environment for certain groups of products and services.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

The changes in the population's behaviour and consumption, determined by the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to an increased annual rate of waste of approximately 4.8 million tons in 2020, of which about 70% were landfilled. The lack of infrastructure for separate collection, i.e., low rate of reuse and recycling of waste, contributed to the failure to meet the targets in terms of municipal waste management and slow transition to the circular economy.

Through the NRRP, €1,239 billion was allocated to build 565 collection centers for small and medium communities, together with 15 integrated waste collection centers. A number of 13,752 underground or above ground *ecological islands*, digitalised for separate collection of the following flows of wastes are to be installed: paper and cardboard, plastic and metal, glass, biodegradable waste, residual waste, as a measure to reduce, reuse and recover.



Container for separate collection of waste, Constanța, Constanța County
Source: Constanța City Hall

Leave no one behind

In order to exceed the low economic performance of small entrepreneurs who would ensure the transition to circular economy in terms of technology, environment and material resource efficiency, but also the need to implement research and innovation in the design phase, in 2022, the Government stimulated the entrepreneurship through a competition of grants of "minimis state aid", with a total budget of €8,000,000. The estimated maximum number of the scheme beneficiaries is 60, the granted maximum amount is €200,000 and the minimum amount is €15,000. This governmental programme supports the transition to the circular economy by co-financing up to 85% of investments in technological transfer, research-development, modernization of material testing units, repair, reconditioning and recycling centers, digital reselling platforms, collection and capitalisation centers, modernization of recycling installations, introducing/expanding the production of non-plastic goods or promoting alternatives to plastic and introducing/expanding the use of waste.

Challenges

- Staged growth of circularity and food waste reduction rates
- Regulation of green public procurement, satisfying the needs to ensure the green transition and to plan the public environmentally friendly purchases
- Development of local production to the detriment of imported products and materials, consolidation of economic competitiveness and employment, priority promotion of innovation and research in the field of circular economy
- Responsible and sustainable supply of raw materials, preservation, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, preventing the generation of waste and sustainable waste management
- Promotion of responsible consumption and environmental education, ecosystem protection and citizen health

Next steps

The *National Strategy for Circular Economy* creates the framework of transition to decoupling the economic development from the use of natural resources, and environmental degradation and determines the directions for action: reducing the raw material consumption and consumer goods, reducing the impact of waste and wastewater production, management and disposal activities on the environment, improving policy coherence and governance, communication and collaboration between local, regional and national authorities. Under the coordination of Department of Sustainable Development, the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of NSCE* is going to be finalised, and fields such as education and professional training, research, development and innovation, public procurement and digitalisation shall be essential actions to facilitate the circular transformation in economy.

To support and stimulate the business sector and the civil society in adopting and implementing the principles and values of the sustainable development concept, Romania undertook the elaboration and operationalisation of the *Romanian Sustainability Code*. At the end of 2022, DDD completed RSC and the Guidelines for its use. The Code is a practical instrument aimed at entities subject to non-financial reporting legal provisions and provides clear guidance as regards the content requirements and the sustainability report preparation process. The reports published on the *Code platform* can be accessed in a transparent manner by all interested parties and may help both identify best practices developed by the reporting entities, and may also support investors or other entities which make financial or commercial decisions based on the sustainability practices of the reporting companies.

Civil society initiative

The *Recycling Map* of Viitor Plus Association is an informative-educational initiative, which, by means of the sustainability platform *After Us* facilitated the information of consumers about the effects of the excess consumption and food waste, the importance of separate

collection and recycling contributing to resource and raw material savings. The main platform instrument is the *national recycling map* of the 16,000 collection points of paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, electrical and electronic equipment, textile, expired medicine and used cooking oil. There is a dictionary about 60 types of materials, with information about how to collect in a separate manner, which items are recycled and which are not, as well as details of the recycling process, and it is attached to the map. The Recycling Map also conducts educational sessions for students in all grades. More than 50,000 pupils took part in the lessons made available by the teachers through the *Recycling Map* programme in 2022.

Local community action

Elementary School no. 11 in Buzău has become the first *circular school* in 2020. The project funded from European Regional Development Fund, which aimed at increasing the energy efficiency in public buildings was implemented at the initiative of Buzău City Hall. The school uses rainwater for household use, as an intangible reserve for fire and through drip irrigation in an experimental plant cultivation in the teaching greenhouse. The power consumption is ensured by photovoltaic panels, LED lamps and motion sensors are used for indoor and outdoor lighting, and the surplus produced during the holidays can be fed into the national electricity grid and put money into the school's account. Heating is provided by heating pumps which extract the thermal energy from the ground. Thus, more than 2000 pupils learn, notice, acquire and apply the circular economy principles, including by collecting waste separately by seven fractions. Buzău was thus the first local community in Romania with a circularity strategy, *2020-2030 Strategy for the transition to circular economy Buzău*.



Teaching greenhouse of the Elementary School no. 11 Buzău, Buzău County
Source: Livia Mărculescu

"...in Buzău, circular economy has moved into a practical phase, because we understood its major benefits from the very beginning: it is a healthy development model of cities, which leads to the improvement of people's life quality when implemented."

Constantin TOMA
Mayor of Buzău Municipality



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Romania's goal

Consolidate Romania's capacity for adaptation and resilience in order to combat the dangers associated with climate change and natural disasters by integrating measures to diminish and adapt to climate change and natural disasters, both in the form of strategies and national policies, and by planning for and increasing the level of education and awareness

Overview

The yearly average temperature in Romania increased by 0.48 degrees between 2016 and 2021 according to meteorological data. Droughts have lasted longer, and more places now experience a shortage of soil water. There have been documented medium and high-intensity hazardous weather occurrences such as tornadoes, heavy rain, thunderstorms with hail, and heavy rain. A significant lack of precipitation in both the summer and the winter, together with a high frequency of hailstorms in the summer, are all results of the geographic location and the unique terrain

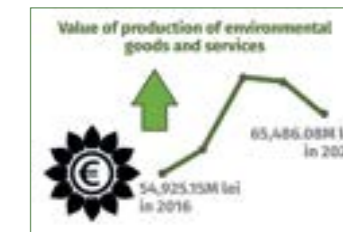
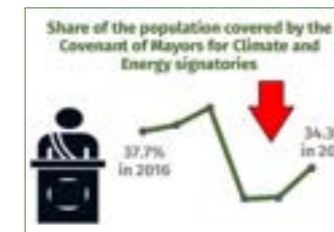
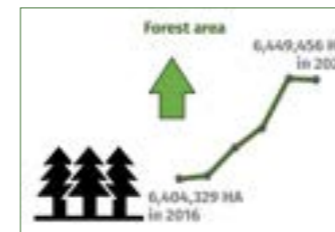
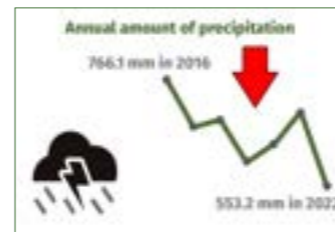
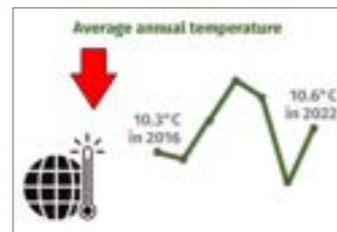
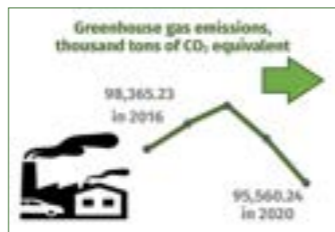
The area protected with anti-hail and rainfall enhancement systems increased 4.3 times in 2022 compared to 2016.

Romania's contribution to global GHG emissions is just 0.3% of global GHG emissions while its share of the EU's overall emissions is less than 3%, with a 3.3% decline between 2016 and 2020. Romania met the EU goal of reducing GHG by 55% by 2030 in 2021, with a total GHG emission decrease of 71% when compared to the base year 1990.

Policies and measures

National efforts have been channelled into actions related to public policy and climate diplomacy. In the field of public policies, the main document is the *National Strategy on Climate Change and Low-Carbon Growth* and the *National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Climate Change and Low Carbon Growth*, supplemented by the *National Defence Strategy*, *National Disaster Risk Management Plan*, *National Hail and Rainfall Increase System Development Programme*, *National Forest Strategy*, etc.

In support of diplomacy efforts, the MEA launched the Climate Diplomacy Network in 2021, with the aim of strengthening the commitment to achieving national, European and international climate goals, strengthening the expertise of Romanian diplomacy in the field, facilitating dialogue between different diplomatic missions and encouraging cooperation between national authorities and with other countries on sustainability and climate issues. The initiative complemented Romania's efforts to combat the climate changes, as a foreign policy priority. In 2022, the Government established the Interinstitutional Committee on Climate Change aiming at coordinating the national climate change and power policies.



Response to climate changes challenges

The consequences related to climate changes have a significant impact on the communities, economy, infrastructure and environment.

Since 2018, Ro-Alert population warning system, the Cell Broadcast-type, was implemented in the event of the occurrence or imminent occurrence of major emergencies such as extreme weather events, floods or other situations which seriously threaten communities. 10,139 warning messages were sent by the end of 2022.

RO-ALERT system is operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department for Emergency Situations and is used in major situations in which life and health of citizens are endangered, in agreement with the *Strategy of General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations consolidation and development*.

Leave no one behind

Extreme weather events have a significant impact on farmers and rural communities since they jeopardize agricultural crops including vineyards, orchards, greenhouses, etc. as well as public and private infrastructure.

The Romanian Government funded both the operational running and operating costs of the national anti-hail and rainfall system on a yearly basis from 2018 to 2022, at both the national and regional levels, in order to cover a number of risks caused by extreme weather phenomena and vulnerable areas with potential for productive agriculture.

Challenges

- Increasing efforts to halt desertification in response to a 30.5% drop in the area that is yearly forested between 2016 and 2021
- Integration of education for climate change and environment as cross-cutting issue, in all subjects and educational cycles, including training of teachers
- Raising awareness and informing the general public about climate change and its impacts to strengthen community resilience
- Supporting RDI initiatives with results of measures taken in the view of reducing the risk of drought and vegetation fires
- Rebuilding and completing genetic databases, especially for native or endemic species

Next steps

The National Hail and Precipitation Augmentation System infrastructure expansion and the active atmospheric interventions for local weather modification will continue to be worked on. A national strategy to prevent and combat desertification and land degradation with a 2030 outlook is currently being completed.

Romania's Long-Term Strategy for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions is being designed to reinforce climate change policies in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and the EU goal of climate neutrality. The *Strategies for Risk Disaster Reduction by 2035* and the *Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation by 2030 with a 2050 outlook* will be developed. The National Integrated Energy and Climate Change Plan will be updated, with new national goals for cutting domestic GHG emissions and raising the proportion of renewable energy in final energy consumption, enhancing energy efficiency across all economic sectors, and raising the degree of internal electricity market interconnection to the European energy market, as well as policies and measures to achieve these targets, will be revised in line with the EU targets under the *Fit for 55* initiative.

The *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* for Romania outlines the necessary reforms and investment objectives for 15 key components, each of which has an influence on national policy to combat climate change and safeguard the environment.

In order to accelerate the education for sustainable development, the organization of adult professional training programs, national contests on environmental topics, national conferences, information campaigns for the general public or dedicated to certain target groups and other events are necessary to speed up, according to the *National Strategy on Education for the Environment and Climate Change 2023-2030*.

Local community initiative

The *Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy* is the largest initiative in Europe which supports the local authorities to transpose into practice the GHG emission reduction ambitions by 2050 and the increase in the resilience before climate change, adaptation measures, green and digital skills for the jobs of the future. In Romania, there are 183 cities and towns, which signed the Covenant of Mayors. The population share covered by the signatories of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy was 34.3% in 2021, being reduced by 3.4 p.p. compared to 2016. An annual increase average rate of 1.16% compared to -1.87% recorded from 2016 to 2021 is necessary in order to reach the 2021 44.3% EU level in 2030.

Civil society action

The first interactive museum dedicated to the environmental education and climate change in Romania was designed in Bucharest by the Act for Tomorrow Association. It is located in an important shopping center to attract more visitors and includes several interactive devices with educational purpose, among which the young people are invited to discover information about nature. It is an environmentally friendly education initiative, based on non-formal learning experiences and the combination of theoretical elements with practical and engaging experiences. The initiative contributes to increasing the awareness of problems related to climate change and environment mainly among pupils, but also among parents, teachers and young students. The initiative is supporting the Green Week national programme.



Eco-museum for environmental and climate change education
Source: [Gala Societății civile](#)

Good practice in administration

Drafted in 2022, the Presidential Administration Report on Limiting Climate Change and its Impact: Integrated Approach for Romania demonstrates the president's dedication to supporting public policies that aim to curb climate change and improve the standard of living for Romanians.

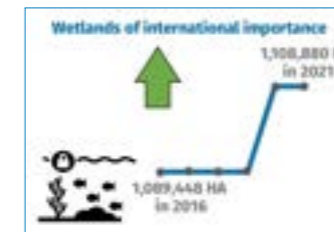
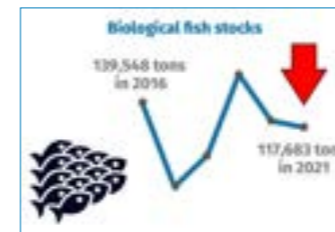
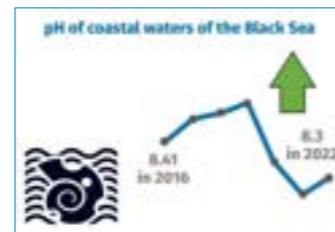
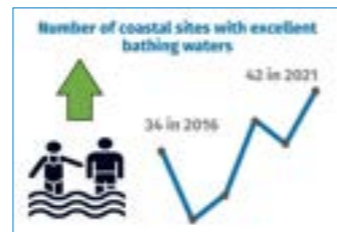
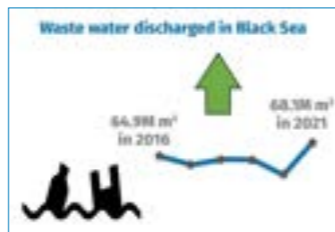
Sibiu County Council drafted a *Best Practice and Awareness Guide on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of Sibiu County*, with the role of providing policy-makers with documents that enable scientifically supported decision-making, but also to raise citizens' awareness, identifying and prioritizing the sectors most vulnerable to climate change in Sibiu.



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Romania's goal

Prevent and reduce the marine pollution, sustainably manage and protect marine ecosystems, preserve coastal areas and practice of sustainable fishing



Overview

Romania has 245 km of coast at the Black Sea, a semi-enclosed sea, with relatively low salinity compared to the oceans and a large accumulation of hydrogen sulphide, which make a vulnerable ecological unit, by limiting the diversity of species. The almost total absence of tides does not allow the dilution of contaminants or natural purification phenomena found in oceans. 3,774 marine species were identified in the Black Sea, most of which being invertebrates and plants, and the oxygen is found only in the upper layer of only 200 m.

The [National Protected Marine Area Network](#) includes 2 marine reserves, 13 natural protected areas of national interest in the southern coastal area, of which 5 are [IUCN](#) natural reserves of category IV, 3 are IUCN natural monuments of category III and 5 are scientific reserves of category I. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve occupies the entire northern coastal area.

The Danube River is the collector and the emissary to the Black Sea of all discharges and emissions of pollutants from riparian countries, affecting the quality of the Danube, Danube Delta and marine coast area waters.

The condition of coastal bodies of water is mostly determined by the Danube, but also by the local pollution sources located in the Romanian and Ukrainian territory of the Black Sea. The number of coastal sites with excellent quality swimming water was 42 in 2021, increasing by 23.5% compared to 2016.

The volume of wastewater evacuated in the Black Sea was 68.1 million m³ in 2021, increasing by 4.9% compared to 2016, while the quantities of pollutants fell on average by 36%.

Although the quantity of fish stocks biologically decreased by 15.7% from 2016 to 2021, there were increases for cod by 17.2%, turbot by 62.5% and shark by 2.5 times, provided that there were time periods when fishing was prohibited for these two species. In 2006, Romania also adopted a preservation measure for the wild sturgeon population, by establishing the prohibition along the Danube, in conjunction with periodic repopulation campaigns.

The value of exports of fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates was €27.3 million in 2021, increasing by 45.2% compared to 2016.

Policies and measures

The *regulatory framework for maritime spatial planning* aiming at the sustainability of maritime economies, development and use of marine areas has been established to be the responsibility of the maritime spatial planning committee and public administration authorities

which are competent in the field. The Management Plan, which transposed the [Directive 2014/89/EU](#), has provided the analysis, planning and organisation of human activities in marine waters, in order to meet cross-sectoral and cross-border environmental, economic, social and safety objectives in promoting the sustainable development and growth of the blue economy.

In order to reach the good environmental condition of the marine region Black Sea, the *Marine Strategy and Programme of Measures* prohibiting programmes, projects and activities that contravene management plans in marine protected areas have been implemented to protect and preserve the marine biodiversity, reduce and eliminate pollution with marine waste, including plastic, contaminants.

The preservation of fish stocks and, especially, economically valuable species or threatened species, was annually regulated, establishing fishing prohibition periods and areas, for the protection and biological recovery of living aquatic resources.

Leave no one behind

Anthropogenic pressures on the ecological status of pelagic habitats are generated by the increase in the abundance of algal species, degradation of water quality through decreased transparency, accumulation of gelatinous organisms, hypoxic events, altered community structure and trophic relationships in the marine ecosystem due to the removal of primary predators by fishing activities, predominance of small pelagic species exerting top-down control over the food chain, favouring the emergence of invasive species, disruption of the food chain through significant increases in jellyfish biomass, and increased ecosystem instability.

The social and economic consequences of these anthropogenic pressures over the pelagic habitats make vulnerable the human communities in the Danube Delta and marine coast area and are particularly evident in fisheries, with reduced catches of commercial fish species, job losses and loss of income from fishing.

Other effects are seen in the decreasing attractiveness of the tourism sector, increased risk factors to human health, increased costs for interventions to restore and rehabilitate marine species and habitats, disruption of people's ability to ensure food security and potential international conflicts resulting from competition for marine bio-resources.

In this context, in 2021, World Bank, Ministry of Environment, water and Forests and partners assumed the planification of a regional approach to meet this challenge through the *Regional Black Sea Basin Greening and Development Project*, funded by Global Environment Fund.

Challenges

- Sustainable use of maritime space and marine resources
- Maintaining the usefulness of land and maritime space in the context of urban development and mass tourism
- Preservation of habitat of aquatic ecosystems and maintenance of marine biodiversity threatened by the amplification of climate changes and anthropogenic activities

Next steps

The maritime spatial planning shall be implemented and monitored for the following 10 years by the central government authorities, with a reporting period every 3 years, for sustainable maritime spatial planning and exploitation. The planning sets out the future sustainable uses of marine waters in the Romanian sector of the Black Sea, through synergies created at sectoral policy level and mobilisation of relevant authorities and key blue economy actors, supporting resilience, competitiveness and inclusion. It aims at coordinated and systemic exploitation of maritime space and marine resources, land use, urban planning and tourism that does not threaten cultural assets, landscapes, integrity of natural habitats and ecological corridors, in line with the pillar of the EU's 2030 New Territorial Agenda [A Green Europe](#) that supports *greener and better livelihoods, climate neutral and resilient cities and regions*.

In agreement with the [EU Strategy](#), the network of protected natural areas will be extended to cover at least 30% of the marine area, i.e. 10% of strictly protected areas. In addition, two important marine protected areas of [ecological or biodiversity](#) importance have been identified in the Romanian sector of the Black Sea.

Good practice

Since 1938, the Mircea school ship has served as one of the Romanian Navy's emblems. The ship is a three-masted, 44-meter-tall Class A bark-style sailing ship that can sail both under sail and with a motor. It has 23 sails with a combined sail area of 1,750 square meters.

As an educational space for future navigators, the Mircea can sail using both sails and motor power. In 2022, the training ship was recognized as the Sustainable Ambassador of Romania and incorporated sustainable practices into its educational program, providing knowledge on understanding the mechanisms through which sustainable development brings benefits not only to the economy but also to the environment.

The Mircea school ship arranges guided tours at ports of call to showcase sustainable activities and concepts for circular economy that are geared toward Zero Waste at standard at sea. The sailing vessel is the only ship of its kind to go through the audit stages, which include: appointing an audit officer and putting the ship on a pathway of actions leading to the accreditation of the ship as a Zero Waste benchmark.

Zero waste refers to the conservation of all resources via responsible production and consumption practices, responsible reuse, and recovery of goods, packaging, and materials, i.e., no incineration and no spills that endanger the environment or human health. In this regard, Mircea has been equipped with the following:

- Plastic/cardboard waste compactor
- Wastewater treatment system
- Propulsion equipment/sails
- Water desalination system
- Hydrocarbon separator
- Reverse osmosis system/water production for drinking purposes



Mircea school ship - Ambassador of Sustainable Romania
Source: Romanian Navy



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

Romania's goal

Sustainable conservation and use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests and eliminate illegal logging and clear-felling combat desertification, regenerate degraded land and soil, develop green infrastructure, conserve and protect wetlands, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, support research in the field

Overview

Located in the geographical centre of the continent, Romania has one of the richest natural heritages in Europe, a characteristic determined by the presence of five biogeographical regions in the country: Pontic, Steppe, Alpine, Continental and Pannonian.

Large populations of mammals that are endangered throughout Europe, among which wolves, bears and Eurasian lynx, may be found in Romania. Regarding the flora, about 3,630 species of plants, of which 23 are declared to be monuments of nature. Romania is one of the few countries in Europe with virgin and quasi-virgin forests.

The area of NATURA 2000 land sites of 53,833 km² has placed Romania sixth in the EU ranking in 2021, and includes the *Danube Delta world natural heritage*, the *Dinosaur Geoparks in Hațeg Land and Buzău Land*, 5 wetlands and 3 *Danube Delta biosphere reserves*, *Pietrosul Rodnei*, and *Retzat*. The area of wetlands of international importance, which are included in the protected areas, increased by 1.8% in 2012 compared to 2016.

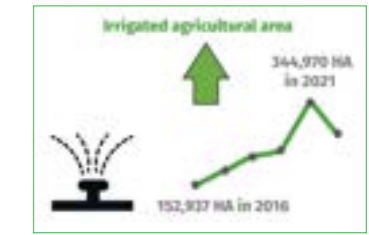
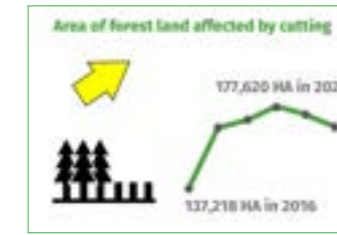
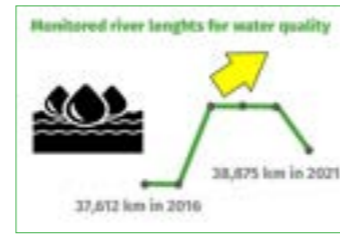
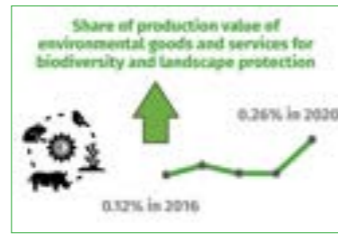
The share of wooden area related to the total area of the country was 27.1% in 2021, compared to 26.87% in 2016. However, the area of land in the forest fund covered by felling increased by 29.4%, and the area of land on which regenerations were performed decreased by 15.7% compared to 2016. On the other hand, in 2020, the volume of wood mass per foot was 2,453 million m³, higher by 152.7 million m³ compared to 2016, suggesting an increase in the wood stock and a potential forest regeneration capacity.

The area of land with soil improvement and soil erosion control works remained unchanged from 2016 to 2021, respectively 2,291 thousand hectares.

Policies and measures

The programmatic documents which coordinated the policies for the exploitation, protection and preservation of natural resources were the *Ordinance on the Regime of Protected Natural Areas*, *Preservation of Natural Habitats, Wild Flora and Fauna*, *National Strategy for Biodiversity Preservation*, *Law on Soil Use, Preservation and Protection*, *Forestry Code*, operational programmes for the environmental development through biodiversity preservation measures, air quality monitoring and decontamination of historically polluted sites, integrated territorial investment programmes.

The legislative and institutional infrastructure intended to ensure the financial and management leverage has developed in recent years, and the National Protected Area Agency was established in 2016. The protected natural area network was also extended and consolidated



by new national parks, natural parks and natural reserves. An example of this was the National Park of Măcin Mountains, established in 2018.

Of the coercive measures applied to protect the forests and combat the illegal felling from 2021 to 2022, based on the *Forestry Code* were confiscated more than 180,000 m³ of wood, 195 cars, utility vehicles and trucks and around 2,022 woodcarts were ordered to be taken for confiscation purposes, according to the MIA statistics. At the same time, 25,800 administrative penalties amounting around €42 million, an average of more than 35 penalties daily, were applied for breaching the provisions of the *Law on the establishment and sanctioning of forest offences*. 26,403 offences provided by *Forestry Code* were notified and, in 4,830 cases, the court started the criminal investigation, an average of more than 36 notifications daily.

Response to climate change challenges

Romania undertook actions as a climate change crisis response. Governmental measures for sustainable management and preservation of forests there were applied, including the increase in funding for the forest management and protection, combating the illegal felling and promoting sustainable forestry practices. It was implemented the computer system to identify the origin and traceability of timber/wood products, in order to obtain statistical information - Integrated Wood Tracking Information System, SUMAL 2.0.

Damaged habitats were rebuilt, such as wetlands and meadows to improve the biodiversity and increase the resistance of ecosystems upon the impact of climate change. Several protected areas, including national parks and natural reserves, for preservation of biodiversity were established, to promote and sustainable use of natural resources.



Biodiversity
Source: Helmut Ignat

Leave no one behind

In Romania, about 40% of the population live in rural areas and depend a lot on the natural resources to live. The disadvantaged rural communities are the most vulnerable to the complex of impacts associated with unsound land use practices through deforestation, land degradation combined with the effects of other hazards enhanced by climate change e.g., soil drought, floods. In this context, the Romanian villages may face the intensification of pauperisation

and depopulation phenomenon, and habitats the losing/reducing biodiversity.

To cope with this situation, Romania implements several policies and programmes to control and monitor the forest felling and wood transport by implementing and modernising the SUMAL system; to increase the forest coverage; irrigation and efficient use of water, more sustainable technologies and agricultural practices were introduced, such as agroecology, which encourages the efficient use of water and protects the soil to reduce the pedological drought impact; worked to extend and consolidate the protected area network, including the national parks and NATURA 2000 sites to combat the loss of biodiversity and protect the natural habitats and species.

In addition, the Government provides support to the rural communities for the transition to more sustainable means and practices and to ensure that they have the resources they need to continue to thrive when faced with environmental challenges such as the *Education and Employment Programme*, *Health Programme*, *Western Regional Programme*, *Inclusion and Social Dignity Programme*, *Sustainable Development Programme*, *Education and Employment Programme*.

Challenges

- Improve the management of land from the forest fund covered by felling, in order to identify the best methods to restore the natural balance and transition to a circular economy
- Increase the forested / regenerated land area, which had a declining trend from 2016 to 2021, comparing with 2008-2015, when it increased by +24%
- Export valorisation of finite products or with a high degree of processing to the detriment of the unprocessed products and raw material export
- Increase the area of land with land improvement and erosion control works
- Increase the area of land with protection forests which are particularly important to combat desertification and restore the damaged land

Next steps

Through the NRRP, Pillar I *Green Transition - Forests and protection of biodiversity*, Romania set out the following targets: the regulatory for sectors with impact on biodiversity; new areas of urban forests of at least 500,000 m² by 2023 or new wooded or reforested land of at least 3,150,000 m² by 2026; removing obstacles from the watercourses to restore connectivity for at least 1,700 ha of riparian habitat, reconstruction of at least 2,800 ha of meadow habitats in environmentally protected natural areas by 2026; depollution of lakes in the Danube Delta with a total area of 100 ha by 2026 to reduce eutrophication and maintain biological diversity; updating the management plans for 250 sites in the national protected natural area network by 2026.

Balanced integration of the social, environmental and economic functions in the management of forests shall be considered through the implementation of the *National Forest Strategy*, and the *Strategy*

on *Adaptation to Climate Change by 2050* shall be related to the methods used to improve the adaptation and resilience increase of the social and economic systems to the effects of climate changes, in various areas and periods of time.

For a better ensure and update the regulation of the preservation and sustainable use of the natural heritage and its correlation with other legislation, the Romanian Government considers the review of the regime of protected natural areas, preservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna.

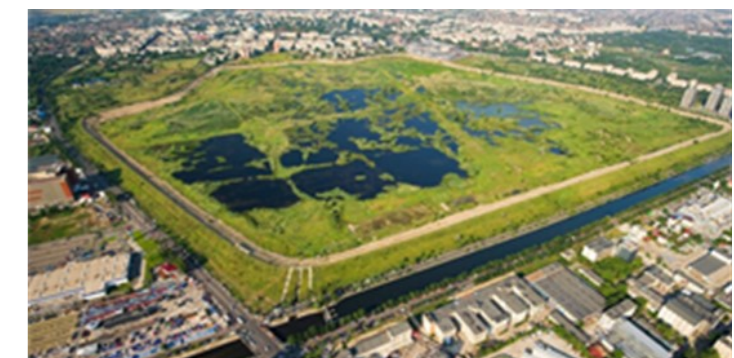
Community good practice

According to the 2019 report related to the condition of forests drafted by the Directorate for Policies and Strategies in Forestry within the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, in Romania, the area of forests infested by forest pests showed an increasing trend. The project *Integrated forest protection through biological pest control - creation of nesting habitats for birds* was implemented to prevent the pest reproduction and control in forest ecosystems, in the forest fund managed by Zetea Ranger's Station, Harghita County. As the bird population density cannot increase without creating proper nesting habitats, the project's main purpose was to prevent the forest pest reproduction and control by designing and locating artificial nests. After conducting a study related to the identification of trees affected by pests and making the inventory of the proper nesting habitats for birds eating larvae and insects, 300 artificial nests were designed, manufactured and installed.

Civil society action

Văcărești Natural Park was established in 2016 through the Government Decision, on the initiative of *Văcărești National Park Association*. It is the first urban natural park in Romania, being located 5 km away from the city centre and it is the largest compact green area in Bucharest, covering 183 ha.

According to the description of Romanian habitats, *Văcărești Natural Park* hosts more special species such as the relict for the plain *Menyanthes trifoliata*, species of community interest *Lindernia procumbens* or *Wolffia arrhiza*, a very rare species, considered to be endangered at national level. The park's flora inventory currently includes 331 species and subspecies, of which 266 are native.



Văcărești Natural Park, Bucharest
Source: *Văcărești National Park Association*



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

Romania's goal

Significantly reduce all forms of violence, reduce corruption, develop efficient and transparent institutions at all levels

Overview

In the last decade, the total resident population of Romania has decreased from 20,121,641 in 2011 to 19,053,815 in 2021. The demographic drop has been caused both by the declining birth rate and by the massive migration to the EU. The medium and long-term negative effects show a decrease in the work force and damage to the sustainability of the social security systems.

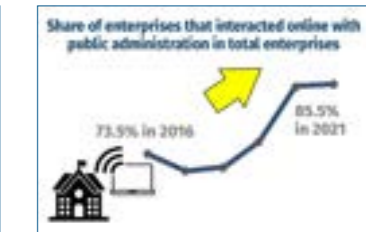
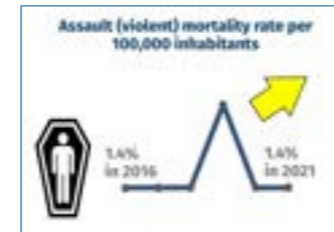
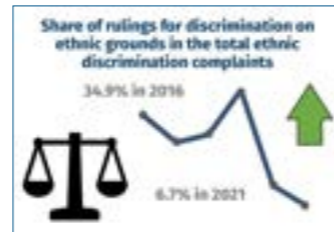
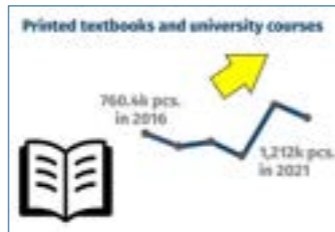
According to the provisional results of the census conducted in 2021, 89.3% of the citizens declared to be of Romanian ethnicity, 6% of Hungarian ethnicity and 3.4% of Roma ethnicity, other important groups declaring themselves of Ukrainian, German and Turkish ethnicity. Ethnic discrimination findings, in the share of petitions admitted by the National Council of Combating Discrimination, have decreased from 41.5% in 2019 to 6.7% in 2021. From 2016 to 2021, textbook circulation by language of instruction increased from 760.4 to 1,212 thousand copies, which indicates a trend towards stability in pre-university education in terms of the subjects taught in schools. On the other hand, from 2016 to 2021, the number of university courses decreased from 58.8 to 20.9 thousand due to the extension of access to internet and electronic learning resources.

Romania faces the human trafficking phenomenon, due to the increased vulnerability conditions of some segments of the population. The total number of trafficked persons per 100,000 inhabitants decreased by 31.6% from 2016 to 2021, being identified, on average, about 550 victims on a yearly basis. In 2021 compared to 2016, the number of minor victims of human trafficking per 100,000 inhabitants decreased by 20%. Institutionalised children, especially girls in residential homes or centres for the disabled, are the most vulnerable persons in terms of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes. The annual average of persons finally convicted to serve a sentence for trafficking was 137.

From 2018 to 2022, the number of persons finally convicted for corruption and work offences was 2,813, of which 900 for embezzlement. For financial fraud, money laundering and tax evasion, offences which involve weapons, explosives and other destructive materials, and for offences related to an organised crime group, 7,351 final convictions were passed.

Of 414 lawsuits before European Court of Human Rights in 2021, 23% were against the Romanian Government. The number of lawsuits won against the Romanian Government increased by 7.04% in 2021 compared to 2016.

In terms of citizens' interaction with public authorities through digital means, recent years have marked significant progress as regards to the simplification of administrative procedures at the level of the central and local government authorities.



Policies and measures

The Strategies to prevent and combat sexual violence, organised crime, human trafficking, related to the recovery of criminal claims and the National Strategy of Anticorruption reinforced the legal framework for combating crimes.

The institutional mechanism on missing persons and the implementation of measures of the National Programme Out of Care for Children have been streamlined, by setting up a mechanism for communicating messages between the Romanian Police and the RoAlert systems for the search of missing children, by the operationalization of special rooms for listening to child victims of crime at the level of territorial police units, by the acquisition of IT solutions for the investigation of child pornography offences.

The right to ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all persons belonging to national minorities is recognised and guaranteed in the Constitution. The Strategy for preventing and combating anti-semitism, xenophobia, radicalisation and hate speech established as objectives the promotion of civic education and consolidation of Romanian society's resilience, as well as educational programmes intended to encourage the construction of cultural bridges.

Response to COVID-19 pandemic

Given the established legal framework and the fraud clues resulted from verifications conducted by the representatives of the National Public Health Institute, at the level of the Economic Crimes Investigation Directorate, the Action Plan CERTIFICATE 2021 was drafted to prevent and combat frauds in the issuance of EU digital certificates on COVID-19. The purpose of the Action Plan, implemented at the county police inspectorates' level, was to prevent, identify and investigate cases of fraud in the process of issuing EU digital certificates on COVID-19, to clarify and check inconsistencies notified by the Ministry of Health or citizens, to hold accountable those responsible, and to ensure a positive public perception of compliance with the measures required to prevent and control the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leave no one behind

In Romania there is a multicultural society in which the rights, language and culture of national minorities are recognised. National minorities take part, through their representatives, in the decision-making processes and state government and are entitled to use their maternal language in the public administration, the judicial system, in education, mass-media, etc.

At the level of the Romanian Government, the Department for Community Social Responsibility and Vulnerable Groups monitors the Roma inclusion measures, minority which is estimated at about 570 thousand persons, and initiated the Romanian Government Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027, approved in April 2022. Measures aiming at Roma identity and culture promotion include the establishment of the

State Roma Theatre, the Roma History and Culture Museum, the National Institute for Research and Preservation of Roma Culture and History, as well as events to promote the traditional Roma crafts.



Multiculturalism
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

Challenges

- Slowing population decline and migration
- Developing social capital and promoting tolerance
- Preserving and promoting Romanian culture and multiculturalism
- Increasing the accuracy of collected data related to human trafficking victims identified in destination countries
- Preventing and putting an end to human trafficking

Next steps

The Strategy of Judicial System Development shall ensure support to continue the efforts to modernise, strengthen and guarantee the independence of justice, the increase in its quality and efficiency by 2025.

The reform for serving the sentences shall support the modernization of detention facilities, consolidation of the probation system and application of legal provisions on social reintegration of persons for whom custodial or non-custodial sanctions have been ordered.

The operationalisation at national level of the national integrated computerised system for the registration of criminal claims and its interconnection with the European criminal records information system, as well as strengthening debt recovery by setting up centralised databases at European level, measures set out in the draft amendment to the Directive 2014/42/EU, shall combat both the lack of reporting by courts and the inconsistency of sent data.

The development of efficient and responsible institutions requires the acceleration of digital technology implementation so that the citizen-administration relation is fast, transparent and qualitative. In order for Romania to reach in 2030 a 60% share of people who have interacted with public authorities via the Internet, it is necessary for the average

annual growth rate to be 16.96%. The Romanian Government cloud shall soon become operational, being a digitalisation instrument of the public administration, which will ensure the interconnection of the digital systems of the public sector by means of an IT platform, with actual benefits for citizens.

Local authority initiative

Sector 4 City Hall mobile app is a useful instrument intended for the inhabitants of Sector 4 in Bucharest, but also to those in transit or who need to interact with the sector administration. The app helped facilitate the communication between the citizens and the city hall, reduce the number of written petitions and reduce the number of problems solved at the local authority counters. It is accessible to users regardless of their experience related to the use of technology. In 2020, of about 16,000 notifications which were made through the app, more than 90% were solved in a very short time. It also performed a rank of the most common types of complaints, with the first being those to the Local Police, regarding the abusive occupation of a parking lot, cars abandoned on the public domain or disturbance of public order. On the 2nd and 3rd places, respectively, were complaints related to investments and complaints related to the assignment of a parking space in sector 4.

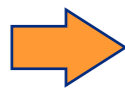
Civil society contribution

The Institute for Research and Crime Prevention is a partner of the Vodafone Foundation in the development of the free mobile app *Bright Sky RO*, together with the Necuvinte Association and Code for Romania. The app provides specialised assistance and support to domestic violence victims or people concerned with the safety of a person they know or a family member. This instrument provides users with a support services database, relationship safety assessment questionnaires, it combats myths about domestic violence, presents the legal provisions in our country which protect victims, as well as the measures which could be adopted to increase online safety. The app also provides data and useful advice related to harassment in public/private areas and sexual harassment.

Good practice

The Project *Children through Drawing and Colour* about language rights of national minorities was carried out by the Department of Interethnic Relations, Romanian Government, in collaboration with pupils in Târgu Mureş. The group of pupils created 20 paintings, one for each minority, to promote the minorities' rights through drawings.

The Project *Sensitive Response to Domestic Violence Cases* focused on trauma and trauma-centred approaches, in partnership with Sensibilu Foundation and funded by the UK Embassy in Romania, offered professionals in the intervention fields of police, social security in Ilfov, Dolj, Arad, Bistrița-Năsăud, Vaslui and Constanța Counties, knowledge, skills and aptitudes that may lead to a reduction of revictimisation and may create a favourable environment in which the survivors' rights are observed and treated with dignity and respect.



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Romania's goal

Progressively increase and diversify official development assistance provided, encourage Romanian economic agents to invest in the economy of developing countries, Romania's accession to the OECD.

Overview

Romania's objectives in the field of international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance are based on international commitments, such as eradication of extreme poverty, promotion of security, sustainable economic, social and environmental protection development. Romania became a donor state of official development assistance in 2007, with the accession to the EU. The ODA net value granted by Romania, as a share of Gross National Income, increased from 0.11% in 2016 to 0.15% in 2021.

OECD confirmed that the total value of ODA actions undertaken by the Romanian public institutions increased by 35% in 2021 compared to 2020, reaching 1.74 billion lei, the equivalent of €352.8 million.

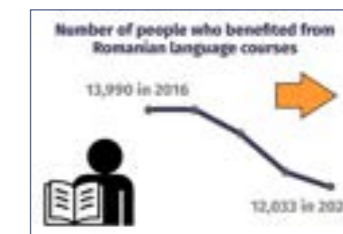
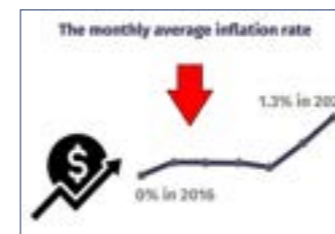
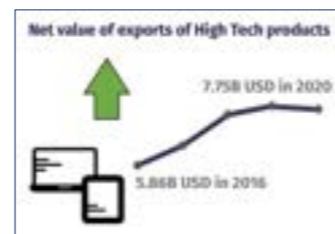
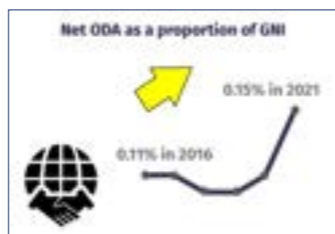
The share of Romania's import of goods and services from the least developed countries, in the total import of Romania, decreased by about 0.1 % from 2016 to 2021, which reflects the low interest of Romanian companies to invest in the economies of the least developed countries. More than 80% of the exports of goods and more than 70% of the imports of goods in 2020 were made by the companies with mixed or wholly foreign capital, companies which generated a commercial deficit of €7.6 billion, less than the deficit generated by companies with Romanian capital, which was €11.3 billion. Foreign direct investments increased by 28.3% from 2016 to 2020, and the imports by 19.6%.

The share of innovative Romanian companies with cooperation agreements concluded with partners outside the country, in all companies, increased from 0.75% to 1.02% from 2016 to 2020. The export of high-tech products increased in 2020 compared to 2016, reaching US\$ 7.8 billion.

In the context of increased representation and significant participation of women in national defence structures, peace negotiations, mediation processes and international peacekeeping missions, Romania had a proactive attitude in the implementation of the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, in agreement with Resolution 1325/2000 of the UN Security Council. Romania has been part of the *Global Network of National Focal Points in Women, Peace and Security*, established at UN level, ever since it was launched in 2016. It also attends training sessions on topics such as gender mainstreaming in the armed forces, leadership, removing gender stereotypes, gender equality and equity, etc.

Policies and measures

The *Law on international cooperation* for development and humanitarian assistance regulates the actions funded from Romania's



state budget, the programming and institutional framework, as well as the funding and implementation framework.

In April 2018, Romania acquired the status of participant in the OECD Development Assistance Committee. It represents the main international forum of donors of international cooperation for development, being also the body that sets the standards in the matter. Thus, Romania's contribution to the fulfillment of global objectives related to official development assistance is validated annually by the DAC.

The 2020-2023 strategic multiannual programme on international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance identifies and plans the general and specific international cooperation objectives for development and humanitarian aid on the short and medium term. Being established in 2016, the Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation, subordinated to the MFA, is responsible for the implementation of programmes and projects in the field of international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance.

Response to the war in Ukraine

In the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which resulted in affecting the energy security of European countries, Romania granted ODA to the Republic of Moldova, supplying more than 80% of the needed electricity, including the development of cross-border electricity transmission interconnections between the two states. In 2022, Romania granted the Republic of Moldova two aids, in the form of direct budget support, in a total amount of €10.48 million.

In September 2022, Romania initiated the Trilateral format Romania - Republic of Moldova - Ukraine, mainly dedicated to the energy security and cooperation in the field of energy. At the first reunion which took place in Odessa, the focus was on immediate support measures necessary for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to cope with the 2022-2023 winter season, but also on long-term measures to strengthen their energy security, with a focus on regional interconnection, taking into account the need to combat the use of energy for geopolitical purposes. Thus, a Trilateral intergovernmental agreement was concluded to boost energy interconnections and cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova.

Leave no one behind

Romania supported the least developed countries, granting ODA amounting to €5.93 million, from 2016 to 2021. At the end of 2022, MFA and RoAid organised the 14th edition of the post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction course at Dakar, in Senegal. Through it, Romania has showcased its expertise and lessons learned from the many peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation operations it has participated in over the past two decades.

Through the 2022 Annual Plan for international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance, the Romanian Government granted voluntary contributions of about €350,000 to UNHCR and UNICEF, to support the Ukrainian refugees.

Challenges

- The main challenge for ODA policy is represented by the many neighbouring and world crises. It is necessary to increase adaptability and flexibility of Romania's action as an ODA donor, especially with the crises that will continue to unfold in the coming years, including those generated by the war in Ukraine. The commitment to increase the volume of ODA may be affected by future pressures on the state budget, which shall also affect Romania's citizens.
- Trade consolidation, through new partnerships and efficient transport infrastructure, in particular developing and encouraging international trade with developing countries, but also encouraging the private sector to invest in R&D, presents complex but not insurmountable challenges.
- Competitiveness of Romanian products on the external market may be improved by increasing the export of high-tech goods, as a measure of efficiency and integration of Romanian companies into the international value chains.

Next steps

To support the ODA policies, the 2024-2027 Multiannual strategic programme on international cooperation for development and humanitarian assistance is under development. It shall be able to foresee the necessary actions to ensure an efficient response to current challenges at international level - conflicts and security crises, combating the climate change effects, food security crisis.

Constant efforts shall be made to increase the total ODA volume to 0.33% of GNI by 2030, according to the commitments assumed at the European level. At the same time, Romania shall act to comply with the EU's commitment to allocate 0.20% of GNI for ODA to the benefit of the least developed countries.

The increase in the volume of export and import transactions with the developing countries boosts their sustainable economic development and the increase in their competitiveness on the world market, leading to mutual profitability in the context of globalisation. Value of imported goods directly contributes to the increase in productivity and economic growth on sustainable bases by incorporating innovation, as well as average and high technology. The higher the share of innovative companies with cooperation agreements concluded with partners outside the country, the greater the chance of achieving products at higher quality standards.

International partnerships

In September 2022, the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre E-ARC organized a comprehensive course on developing the resilience of Moldovan institutions, in the context of the strategic partnership for European integration of the Republic of Moldova. The training provided by E-ARC, in partnership with the Institute for European Policy and Reform, related to the general theory of resilience, societal resilience in relation to disinformation, and resilience in case of complex crises and emergencies. This way, Romania and the Republic of Moldova agreed to develop their cooperation in the field of strengthening democratic resilience, for the benefit of regional resilience.

Within the Agreement between the Romanian Government and the Moldavian Government on the implementation of the technical and financial support programme based on a non-refundable financial aid of €100 million granted by Romania to the Republic of Moldova, signed in February 2022, projects shall be implemented in strategic fields, such as education and improvement of public utility services. Thus, through the 57 investment projects provided for in the "European Village" project, more than 95,000 people will have access to improved water and sewage services. At the same time, in order to ensure a qualitative educational process, 135 secondary education institutions shall be provided with laboratory equipment for the physics, chemistry and biology rooms. In addition, 125 minibuses and 14 school buses shall be purchased, specially equipped for the transport of disabled children.

Local community support

The Blue Dots are specially designed support centres for refugee children from Ukraine and their families. They provide services for urgent needs of children and women, in an integrated manner.

Blue Dot centres and support centres for children and women currently operate at the border crossing points in Sighetu Marmatei, Siret, Isaccea, Albița, Huși, Iași, Brașov, and Bucharest.

Supported by UNICEF, they were created in partnership with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, through the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, UNHCR and with the support of local authorities, county authorities and local NGOs. New Blue Dot centers are under installation.

Civil society action

The "Education at Height" programme, developed by *Însemne Association* in partnership with the Department for Sustainable Development, private companies and civil society organisations, reached in 2022 its fourth season of multidisciplinary lessons organised by using the drone, for schools in Romania, Republic of Moldova and other European states. More than 3500 schools took part in the most recent edition of the programme, of which about 250 in the Republic of Moldova, with an average of the number of pupils of 75/school.



Lesson 8: Live Climate Action from Oltenia's Sahara - Stop Desertification! Source: [Educație la Înălțime](https://www.educatie-la-inalttime.ro/)

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE INDICATORS AND SDGS

Methodology

Sociological research, carried out between June and August 2022, as part of the *Project Sustainable Romania*, measured public opinion on the *net interest* regarding the 99 National Statistical Indicators for Sustainable Development, through 6 opinion barometers that cross-sectorally addressed the 17 SDGs.

Net interest: the level of interest, which is the difference between positive responses: *very interested* and *fairly interested*, and negative responses: *quite a little interested* and *very little interested*.

Level of Interest

The average **level of net interest** was around **38%**, and the themes of interest to the population were identified at the ends of the statistical distribution, namely those that stood out with the highest level of net interest, respectively the lowest level of net interest.

The main topics that showed high interest among the population and that were found in public, political and media debates are presented Table 1.

The main topics with low interest among the population are abstract topics related to the economy and especially to econometrics: productivity, the share of economic fields in GDP, industry, tourism, research & development, exports, imports, SMEs, foreign direct investments, financial intermediation in the economy, Official Development Assistance, energy consumption in industry. Other topics of low interest are presented in Table 2.

Conclusions

As result of the application of opinion barometers regarding the 99 National Indicators for Sustainable Development associated with the 17 SDGs, it was found that the variation in the importance of the SDGs in public perception is smaller than the 99 indicators analyzed separately.

This situation was due to the fact that each individual SDG represents the average of several individual indicators, and the average values are less far from the neutral center than the multitude of indicators.

The areas related to poverty, SDG 1, quality of life, SDG 10 and forest protection, SDG 15 recorded the high interest.

Also, the domains related to the infrastructure of public supply networks, SDG 6, gender equality, SDG 5 and education, SDG 4 indicated a high interest.

From the other 11 SDGs, corresponding to the lack of interest, the areas of SDG 17, SDG 14 and SDG 8 stood out, which include most of the econometric indicators.

Further popularization of the sustainable development goals and principles, through campaigns at the level of the whole society, will increase the level of interest in public perception towards the ROSDS 2030 and the 17 SDGs.

Table 1 High interest

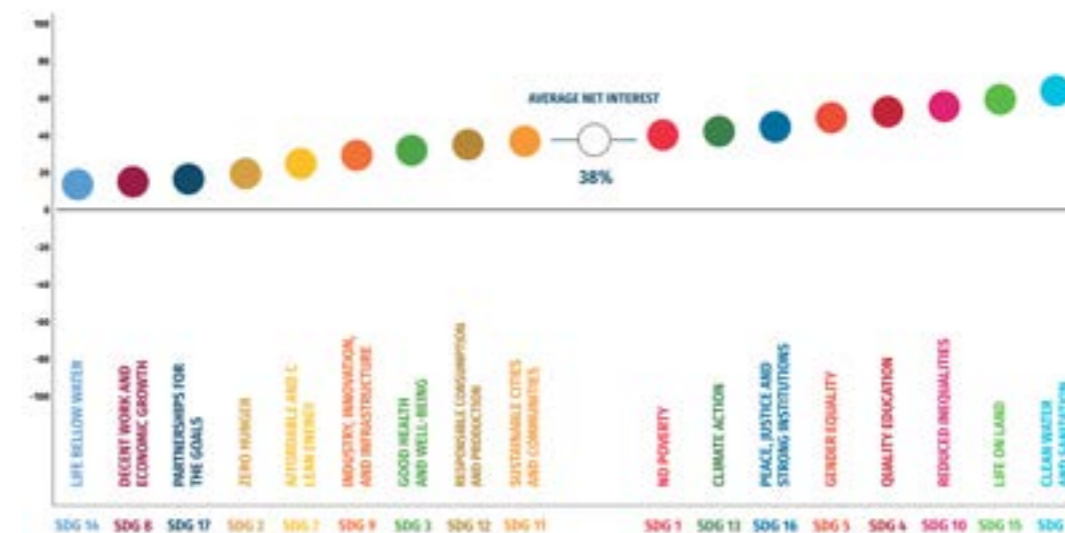
Environment	Protecting forests, +81% Combating illegal logging, +79% Natural disasters, +69% Climate change, +67% Untreated sewage and waste water, +65% Pollution, +63%
Economy and infrastructure	Inflation, +79% Connection to the sewerage network, +71% Connection to the drinking water network, +67% Modernized public roads, +63% Encouraging sustainable production and consumption, +62% Irrigation of agricultural land, +60%
Education	Children's participation in pre-university education, +75% Finding jobs for young people after education, +65%
Health and quality of life	Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory diseases, +69% Domestic violence against women, +68% Violence that can cause victims casualties, +60% Road mortality, +67% Human trafficking among minors, +66%

Table 2 Low interest

Socially sensitive aspects in public discourse	Alcohol consumption, - 9% Suicides, +12% Births among underage mothers, +17% Obesity, +18%
Aquatic life	Natural aquatic areas/wetlands, +18%
Transport	Passenger transport, +16% Dangerous goods in freight transport, -16%
Agriculture	Agricultural cadastre, +6% New varieties and hybrids of agricultural plants, -10%
Heterogeneous, punctual subjects	Promotion of electric vehicles, +12% Adult participation in continuing education, +17% Education of minorities in the mother tongue, +8%

The results obtained from the analysis of individual indicators can also be found in the analysis of the overall SDGs.

Public interest was higher for the SDGs related to quality of life and the environment.



Subjective indicators of perception
SDGs net interest rate
Source: Department of Sustainable Development

5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

Two years after Romania expressed its commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Department of Sustainable Development was created for transectoral coordination at the highest level of the Government, under the direct coordination of the Prime Minister of Romania.

At the midpoint for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, due to the actions carried out and coordinated by the Department of Sustainable Development, Romania now has a **strategy** and an **action plan** that holistically tackle the implementation of the 17 SDGs by 2030 and **national indicators** to monitor progress.

A **governance framework for sustainable development** was established, coordinated from the centre of the Government through a cross-sectoral approach, and recognised regionally and internationally as robust and innovative in support of increasing the effectiveness of public institutions to achieve the SDGs.

A functional **inter-institutional network** ensures SDGs implementation at all levels and there are **mechanisms and tools** to streamline implementation through collaboration, partnerships, training and upskilling.

Further, the Department focused on developing **mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development** and, in particular, on aligning policy planning and budgeting in support of the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

Mechanisms for monitoring implementation progress were also developed: databases, platforms, collaboration agreements whereby ministries, government agencies and other organisations commit to regularly providing high-quality data to strengthen the national data system for sustainable development.

A paradigm shift was also needed for the entire society, therefore *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* is **citizen-oriented** and recognises the importance of raising awareness and enhancing the active engagement of all relevant societal actors. Through awareness-raising campaigns and consultations, the Department of Sustainable Development initiated a **movement to create a critical mass** so that society becomes a partner in the *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy's* implementation.

In order to **incentivise the business sector** and civil society to adopt and implement the sustainable development principles and values, the **Romanian Sustainability Code** was developed and operationalised.

HOW WE PROGRESSED

Romania reports 62.1% progress made towards the implementation of *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, with different outcomes for each SDG:

- SDG 10 with 84.3% and SDG 13 with 81.3% are the most advanced
- SDG 4 with 44.3%, SDG 3 with 41.0% and SDG 9 with 37.0% have the lowest levels
- SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 13, SDG 14 and SDG 15 show an upward trend
- SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12, SDG 16, SDG 17 show insignificant increase

The analysis of the 291 monitored indicators showed that:

- 91 indicators are on track
- 61 indicators show decreasing trends
- 78 indicators show a moderately increasing trend
- 62 indicators show a stagnating trend

These results indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic, recent international crises, rising cost of living and supply chain challenges have impacted the progress towards SDGs achievement.

HOW WE RANK WORLDWIDE

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network report for 2022 ranked Romania 30th out of 163 countries in the global SDG ranking, with a score of 77.7%.

Romania recorded the following trends:

- SDG 1 and SDG 6, achievement
- SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 14, SDG 16 and SDG 17, moderate improvement
- SDG 7, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 15, stagnating
- SDG 4, decreasing



SDSN Dashboard of Romania
Source: Sachs et al. 2022. From Crisis to Sustainable Development: the SDGs as Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond. Sustainable Development Report 2022. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WHAT WE AIM FURTHER

Strengthen and extend the governance framework for sustainable development

- Localise SDGs, including building the one-stop-shop platform
- Strengthen and extension of the regulatory and inter-institutional cooperation framework by regulating the status of the Hubs for Sustainable Development
- Strengthen the policy coherence for sustainable development by Regulatory Impact Assessment Planning
- Education and training programme for 2000 experts of sustainable development by 2026, of which 1,600 for local authorities
- Develop the national budgetary planning framework to implement the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy
- Set up the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development for Public Administration

Monitor and evaluate the implementation of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy

- Monitor and evaluate the indicators for sustainable development
- Annual progress report to the Romanian Parliament
- Monitor legislation and policies on sustainable development

Involve all segments of society in the implementation of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy

- Promote sustainable development, especially among young people, in schools and universities. Introduce the concept of sustainable development in education
- Community-based campaigns to communicate and promote sustainable development concepts
- Support and incentivise businesses and civil society to implement the SDGs, including through the implementation of the Romanian Sustainability Code

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Romania is at a crucial milestone in fulfilment of the SDGs, having the chance to capitalise EU funding allocated in 2021 under the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan*, which entails access to €29.18 billion of [NextGenerationEU funds](#). Over 41% of the funding proposed in the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* is allocated to the green transition, with measures to phase out coal and lignite production by 2032. Green transition reforms also include actions to promote sustainable transport and decarbonise road transport, green taxation, improved energy efficiency in private and public buildings, incentives for zero emission vehicles and a modal shift to rail and water transport.

The European Semester, the European Union's framework for the coordination of economic and social policies of the Member States provides a strong framework for effective coordination of economic and social policies in light of current challenges and for advancing the implementation of the SDGs.

Under the European Semester, EU Member States report on *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* implementation, which includes reforms and investments contributing to the green and digital transition, using the *National Reform Programme* as a tool. Starting from 2021, the *National Reform Programme* includes a chapter on country progress in implementing the SDGs. In order to track the contribution of reforms to the implementation of the SDGs, Romania successfully proposed in the *National Reform Programme* the correlation of reform priorities with the SDGs.

REFORM PRIORITIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
NUMBER OF PRIORITIES TARGETING EACH SDG	[5]	[3]	[3]	[2]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[5]	[6]	[2]	[1]	[3]	[4]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[0]
3.1 Fiscal-budgetary policy and financial banking stability																	
3.2 Green transition																	
3.2.1 Environment & Climate change																	
3.2.2 Energy																	
3.3 Digital transformation																	
3.4 Business sector & Competitiveness																	
3.4.1 Favorable environment for public & private investments																	
3.4.2 Transport																	
3.4.3 Research & Development & Innovation																	
3.5 The labor market, social inclusion and the fight against poverty																	
3.6 Health																	
3.7 Administrative capacity building and other government measures																	
3.8 Education and skills																	

Reform priorities for SDGs
Table source: 2023 National Reform Plan

MAIN CHALLENGES

OECD experts identified potential bottlenecks in the effective and coherent implementation of the *National Action Plan of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, in 2022.

Challenge 1

Limited use of governance tools for SDGs policy integration

Romania has put in place an ambitious institutional framework for policy coherence for sustainable development, which contributes to the coordination and implementation of the *National Action Plan*. The benefits of this framework could be further leveraged through a more systematic use of governance tools, more specifically Institutional Strategic Planning, budgeting and regulatory impact assessment.

The Department of Sustainable Development could request ministries to explain how their budget contributes to implementing the SDGs in their policy declarations. Ideally, this information would be summarised in an SDGs Budget Statement accompanying the draft budget.

OECD Recommendation, 2022

The Budget Statement may serve as a reporting tool that provides greater transparency on government actions.

Challenge 2

Large disparities in localising SDGs and few mechanisms for vertical coherence

The competencies and resources of cities and regions also depend on countries' degree of decentralisation. In Romania, coordination between national and local-level actions for sustainable development is not yet systematised. The challenges to support local authorities in incorporating the principles and values of the concept of sustainable development into local policies and strategies lies primarily in limited human resources and limited technical expertise.

A virtual 'One-stop-shop' platform is under construction, and is expected to contribute to strengthened SDGs implementation at the local level. This interactive platform will link the data collected at the national level by the National Institute of Statistics and the government databases with data on the SDGs indicators at local level. A territorial approach to the SDGs means mapping and analysing the main economic, social and environmental trends in SDGs implementation, in terms of evolution over time in the same region, and also in terms of comparisons between counties and regions. The platform will map and highlight examples of good practice, organisational projects and managerial capabilities that create and support such projects. It will be a place of knowledge resources, learning, promotion and dialogue for sustainable development. The platform could also support the comparison and alignment of laws

related to sustainable development across regions, and vertical coherence and coordination.

Training of local-level civil servants, including establishment of the Hubs for Sustainable Development in local authorities offer additional opportunities for strengthened vertical coherence. If Romania puts in place SDGs budgeting at central level, this could inspire local authorities to align their own expenditures and revenues with SDGs.

Challenge 3

Limited correlation and monitoring of Romania's many sectoral policies to inform the sustainable development strategy implementation

Challenges are linked to the multitude of data sources and limited human resources and statistical expertise in line ministries, which indicates a strong need for further training and guidance. There also appears to not be enough clarity on the roles and responsibilities involved.

In terms of correlation between sectoral policies and *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*, the *National Action Plan* assigns the Department of Sustainable Development with the responsibility to develop guidance and recommendations for line ministries to integrate sustainable development into strategic documents at central level in their respective areas. This guidance should include strong elements of cross-coordination and correlation between sectoral policies and how these - individually and collectively - contribute to the implementation of the *National Action Plan*.

In terms of monitoring, the *National Action Plan* will be accompanied by a monitoring framework, which provides an opportunity for streamlining and using various data sources on sustainable development in policy making.

The ongoing training of "experts of sustainable development", the new Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development and the One-Stop-Shop platform will help to strengthen the capacity of civil servants to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development and implement the SDGs. The Department is also expected to develop, with OECD support, a guide for ministries to ensure effective and coherent *National Action Plan* implementation.

Challenge 4

Cross-cutting challenges for the specific objectives of the *National Action Plan*

Limited human resources

Limited technical expertise/capacity

Limited funding

NEXT STEPS

Strengthening commitment, vision and leadership for policy coherence for sustainable development

- Ensure adequate financial and human resources across the Government, through Government Decisions, if necessary, to support the commitments made in the *National Action Plan*
- Establish mandatory procedures that systematically involve the Department of Sustainable Development in the implementation of the new Government Decisions linked to planning, budgeting and regulatory impact assessment
- Encourage all ministries to use the option to introduce, for each new Institutional Strategic Plan, policy coherence for sustainable development-specific information on projects and activities that foster sustainable development
- The Department of Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Finance could work together to mainstream the SDGs perspective in the methodology for the preparation and implementation of budgetary programmes
- SDGs tagging exercise to provide a mapping of how public spending contributes to the SDGs and to the 2030 targets

Strengthening institutional and governance mechanisms to address policy interactions

- Organise at least two annual meetings of the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development
- Develop a "job description" for the professionals of the Hubs for Sustainable Development so that they know what is expected from them with a view to coordinate actions and policies in their ministry with those of other ministries
- Use *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy* as a framework for aligning policy priorities, incentives, and objectives across national, regional and local public authorities
- Assign a staff member in the Department of Sustainable Development to actively monitor and advance progress on vertical policy coherence for sustainable development throughout Romania

- Systematically involve local-level authorities in the Regulatory Impact Assessment cost-benefit analysis

- Provide training to local civil servants and establish Hubs for Sustainable Development in local and regional authorities

Making better use of tools to anticipate, assess and address impacts of policies on sustainable development

- Elevate the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development to a Parliamentary Committee to strengthen its convening power and impact
- Embed a dimension of policy coherence for sustainable development or a dedicated chapter on it in the Annual Report to the Parliament on the implementation of *Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy*
- Continue to strengthen the capacities of the Romanian Court of Accounts to undertake SDGs-related performance audits
- As part of the new procedures for conducting the Regulatory Impact Assessment, the Department of Sustainable Development has to valorise the mandate to review new strategies to check the quality of the responsible ministries' assessments of regulatory impacts on the SDGs, and to see if and how the initiator involved local stakeholders in the process
- Link sectoral strategies and policy outcomes with the National Indicators for Sustainable Development
- Finalise and implement across the Government the new Institutional Strategic Plans dashboard, with information and periodic reporting data on strategic objectives, programmes, budgetary measures and indicators corresponding to the planning levels

Romania still faces many challenges before achieving the 2030 targets. Since 2017, programmatic documents have been adopted to guide sustainable development in Romania; governance framework to reach SDGs and implementation tools have been developed, but the mid-term review reveals that there is still much to be done.

In addition to the institutional dimension, Romania needs to develop a critical mass of people to change mindsets and act in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development principles.

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ANDRAS Gabriella, cover illustration



Statistical annex

