

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Milestones we need for Post-pandemic Reconstruction



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The Coronavirus pandemic took us all by surprise. Regardless of our nationality, training, social status or professional activity, the landmarks of the world we live in have suddenly changed. The effects on each of us are smaller or larger, but they certainly exist. The health challenge quickly impacted the economy. Most of the countries have closed their borders for various periods of time to slow down the spread of the virus and find the respite needed to strengthen the capacity of health systems to manage the pandemic. Thus appears a first principle that must underlie the post-pandemic construction: not only the whole world is interconnected, but also all sectors of socio-economic life. Like the domino effect, a crisis in one sector has an impact in others. This evolution is a first indication that we need a holistic approach when trying to find solutions to contemporary problems.

Any kind of crisis has considerable effects on society and on people's well-being. However, whenever we relate to such difficult moments,

we are required to have the ability to identify the positive parts, even if sometimes they are not easy to find. Hope, energy, determination and a dose of optimism are often placed in the lessons we should learn and of course in the reconstruction stage. In these turning points, we need to look clearly at how contemporary society works and analyze those mechanisms that can be improved. Socio-economic reconstruction is therefore not just a step towards overcoming the crisis, but an opportunity to improve the world we live in and that will also be the legacy for future generations.

The health crisis hit at a time when the need to change the model of economic development was expanding. The impact of human activity on the environment has more and more visible effects. The classical paradigm of consumption-based economic development has increased welfare to a certain level, but has also shown its limits. Romania needs a change in the current paradigm of development to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We are living in a period marked by the process of globalization, accentuation of inequalities and aggravation of environmental problems. We need a new approach, and sustainable development offers us solutions to most of the problems of contemporary society.

The 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted by Romania in April 2016, when the Romanian Parliament, through a joint sitting of the two chambers, became the first of the 176 Inter-parliamentary Unions to express its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Since 2017, the Department of Sustainable Development has been set up within the Prime-minister working structure, coordinating the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. The most important result of the Department is the revision of the National Strategy for Sustainable

Development of Romania. The overall vision of the new strategy is that sustainable development has a framework that, once mastered by the citizen, will help create a more equitable society, defined by balance and solidarity and to cope with the changes brought about by current global, regional and national problems, including demographic decline. The care of the state towards the citizen and the respect of the citizen towards the institutions, towards his neighbor, moral values and cultural and ethnic diversity will lead to a sustainable society.

Resilience, solidarity, the need to not leave anyone behind are fundamental principles that have to be embraced now more than ever, considering the current socio-economic crisis we are going through. It is almost unanimously accepted by experts working in the field of sustainable development that the pandemic will inevitably have a significant impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A report published by the United Nations Economic and Social Committee mentions three possible scenarios: accelerating the transition to sustainable development, keeping pace with the pandemic and worsening the situation. Beyond the scenarios, it is my firm belief that we should all guide our actions towards turning the crisis into a real opportunity for a solid and sustainable socio-economic reconstruction.

The road we have to take is largely drawn by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The more anchored national policies are in this new paradigm, the better the chance we have not only to overcome the crisis, but also to build a resilient, fairer and more environmentally friendly society. Romania's challenges for 2030 are to maintain the pace of economic growth, so as to reduce the gap with other EU countries; achieving higher levels of productivity through diversification, technological modernization and innovation; strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking services.

In the vision of the Department for Sustainable Development of Romania, the consequences of

the pandemic sound as strong as an alarm signal for the whole of society. First of all, public administration should formulate policy proposals and take those decisions which, in addition to reducing the effects, also ensure sustainable development in the medium and long-term.

We owe ourselves the courage to design a society after reconstruction, in which the quality of life is at an even higher level than before the outbreak of the pandemic. In addition to the action of public authorities, however, the involvement of the private environment, experts from civil society, academia, research institutes, NGOs will also be needed. All these efforts will not have the desired impact if we fail to form a critical mass of citizens who believe in the principles of sustainable development and who put them into practice in their daily lives.

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