

GREECE:

People' s Scorecard on National Delivery of the 2030 Agenda

Executive Summary

On the occasion of the second Greek Voluntary National Review (VNR) process, members of the Civil Society sector in Greece convened with the aim of drafting the present People' s Scorecard on the national delivery of the 2030 Agenda. The process took place under the coordination of the Hellenic Platform for Development (HPD) -partner of the Action for Sustainable Development- and HIGGS. Being the first of its kind in the country, the People' s Scorecard is an important testimony that will guide future efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Following a participatory approach and engaging different tools were proven beneficial for the development of the final outcome. In total, 30 organizations and networks submitted their responses for the questionnaire that was disseminated. Environmental protection, gender equality, education and health were among the areas of interest for which the most responses were collected. More than 7 working sessions/ meetings took place to ensure the validity and the enrichment of the information provided. Additionally, a series of semi-structured interviews with experts and representatives of CSOs and other bodies were conducted so as to acquire a holistic overview of SDGs advancements in Greece. The data and qualitative information collection encountered significant challenges with the limited capacity of the CSOs and of the networks being the most critical of them. Although CSOs are willing to be engaged in the SDGs, the fact that most of them do not have the capacity, in terms of human and financial resources, to monitor advancements has an impact on their actual contribution.

The People' s Scorecard report aims to consider whether – and where - progress has been made, highlight gaps, and underline where more determination is required. Greece has entered into a slow transition process over the achievement of SDGs, attempting to go from theory – adopting laws and national action plans - to practice and implementation. However, policies ownership and commitment by the Greek government are yet to be seen.

The key conclusions and recommendations that emerged read as follows:

- The Greek State should maintain and strengthen the dialogue with the CSOs regarding the implementation of the SDGs
- The data collection on sustainable development should be enhanced by strengthening the ELSTAT and the CSOs
- The creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the SDGs would accelerate implementation efforts by facilitating collective action
- A Parliamentary Committee on Sustainable Development should be established to enact legislation and other relevant initiatives that lead to the effective fulfillment of the country' s commitments, and
- a *Permanent General Secretary* responsible for the implementation of SDGs policies should be appointed

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Overview Assessment

Governance - National Development Plans - Institutional Support

Coordination of planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies for the 2030 Agenda is being carried out at the highest political level - the Presidency of the Government, the General Secretariat of Coordination and other top government entities. However, while such an administration structure might ease difficulties over coordination and possibly enhance policies coherence, it comes with drawbacks: first, it does not secure continuation of policies when the political landscape change after general elections, as permanent administrative staff - such as ministerial general secretaries – have a secondary role.¹ Second, this structure creates a paradox: rather than establishing an official institutional framework for monitoring and assessment, the planning and implementation of policies are carried out by the same entities that monitor and evaluate.

Concerning planning, over the last three years under the General Secretariat of the Government, National authorities/Ministries have drawn national action plans for various areas of policy interest that fall under the umbrella of specific SDGs, setting the strategy for the achievement of SDGs. However, the approach followed was not uniform nor holistic, as in some cases national action plans were adopted, while in other sectors just strategic approaches were laid down. In this context, a limited number of national action plans has been published, such as the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020), the National Plan for the Rights of the Child (2021), the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021), the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021), the National Strategy for LGBTQ+ Equality (2021), the National Energy and Climate Plan, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. More national action plans are yet to be published to cover the SDGs (for example, a National Plan for Ageing, for Corruption etc.).

While the publication of these national action plans (NAPs) is definitely a positive step, in many cases they have drawn criticism over the weak engagement of CSOs in the preparation of these plans and the fact that they do not provide the necessary conditions for CSOs

¹ A positive fact is that both the previous and the current government have kept a similar administrative structure for planning and coordination at top level.

involvement in the implementation of the NAPs. Additionally, many stakeholders underline the lack of detailed budget and evaluation indexes and the weak public deliberation process. Moreover, it is argued that rather than planning a long-term strategy, most programmes have a short-term vision while lacking frequent follow-ups, impact assessments, milestones and schedules, leaving little space for adaptation and policy improvements.

Implementation of policies, action plans and strategies at national and at subnational level

In legislative terms, some progress was made as various laws concerning the SDGs were adopted. An example is the gender equality issue where important steps have been taken and are reflected in legal, policy and administrative reforms. In 2019, the newly elected government introduced the “General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality” (previously named as “General Secretariat of Equality”). The General Secretariat is the governmental agency competent to plan, implement, and monitor the implementation of policies on equality between women and men in all sectors. In 2019, it was transferred under the control of the Ministry of Labor (previously under the control of the Ministry of Interior). Although there was no major change in the responsibilities and the mandate of the government body, the approach shifted towards a more family-oriented model of approaching equality. In Greece, as many CSOs and international organizations observe, there is a gap between the adoption of laws and policies and their actual implementation. During the reporting period some progress was made as various laws concerning the SDGs were adopted (laws on tackling inequalities and discrimination on a gender basis, preventing and combatting GBV and domestic violence e.tc.). An example is the adoption of the Law 4604/2019 on “Promoting Substantial Gender Equality” whose implementation has been poor so far. In 2018, the Istanbul Convention was ratified by the Law 4531/2018 reinforcing the legal and institutional framework on preventing and combatting gender based and domestic violence in Greece. However, it should be noted that legislative measures that were later introduced, the most severe of which is the mandatory shared custody for all children in Greece, have impaired progress. This step was heavily criticized by both the Council of Europe and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women, however such concerns have been disregarded during the parliamentary voting process. Additionally, the laws and the policies introduced are under criticism for neglecting to tackle various issues of significant importance and for the weak consultation process followed (i.e., the case of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021 -2025). On different occasions it has been reported that CSOs with a long feminist and gender-oriented tradition were often excluded from institutional discussions around the adoption of new policies that affect femininities in the country. Moreover, focusing on the environment, the New Climate Law (4935/2022) was adopted, where the scheduled phase-out of lignite plants was included (although this was pushed back due to the advancements in the energy sector). While the adoption is definitely a positive step, the law is under criticism for not setting more ambitious and legally binding goals for all actors.

Concerning the subnational level, local leadership and participation are of utmost importance for the achievement of the SDGs as municipalities are much closer to citizens and are aware of issues on the ground and can be more adaptive to the central government. In various cases, regional and local authorities have participated in the consultation processes for the National

Action Plans, as is also the case with The Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE) that contributed to the public dialogue. An example of local authorities' engagement is the promotion of gender equality where the Municipal and Regional Equality Commissions are the key institutions. Between 2019-2021, 278 out of a total of 332 Greek municipalities had concluded the establishment of Municipal Equality Commissions, while 37 Municipalities are in the process of doing so. Out of a total of 13 Regions, 8 have concluded the establishment of Regional Equality Commissions. However, at the time of the National Plan for Gender Equality release, and despite the legislative provisions, few Regional Equality Commissions were fully operating. On the other hand, it is well-known that local authorities lack the know-how, the capacity and financial resources for the development of activities, thus they cannot be fully engaged in the implementation of policies for the achievement of SDGs. In most cases, municipalities are engaged in the SDGs in the context of EU funded programmes, missing a wider view. On the other hand, a limited number of municipalities (for example the municipality of Trikala) are very active in numerous sectors, following a more holistic approach. Moreover, communication linkages among the government and lower administration levels are fragmented and weak, a fact that hinders action plans implementation and overall, policy coherence. As the role of local authorities is expected to gain more importance in the implementation of SDG policies, the government should further support local authorities, while municipalities should also seek co-operation with various actors.

Furthermore, it is well recognized that data quality and availability is of significance importance for the implementation of policies and action plans over SDGs. In the case of Greece, data availability is problematic. In this context, data collection and analysis should be enhanced by both the ELSTAT and the civil society itself. Measuring accurately complex human problems, characteristics and outcomes require innovative approaches and the building of relevant indicators. Similarly, specialized tools should be developed so as to facilitate the use of available data and technical skills should be strengthened to enhance the statistical analysis and capacity.

Public Awareness, Citizen participation and civil society engagement

There is little doubt that CSOs have a primary role in tackling various important issues in Greece, such as the implementation of support programmes for vulnerable groups (LGBTQI, refugees, older people, homeless) fighting poverty, providing health services, protecting the environment etc.

However, the majority of the CSOs have not used the SDGs framework at all as they virtually struggle to survive - mainly through EU funds or support from foundations and through volunteering. Thus, while CSOs work towards the achievement of SDGs, they do not do so with a view to the wider environment. Capacity issues and lack of funding constitute the main barrier for a deep engagement of CSOs to the SDGs implementation. For example, an organization stated "we found out about the SDG process and Greek report by accident through personal contact – and this put us in touch with other CSOs". Overall, while the Greek CSOs are becoming gradually more active in issues such as gender equality, the climate crisis, and the protection of democratic institutions, recognizing the importance of the SDGs as tools

for improving outcomes, nonetheless they have not yet fully grasped their interdependence and interrelationship. In this context, it is becoming evident that climate adaptability nor economic growth cannot be achieved without gender equality and, at the same time, falling behind on any of the SDGs poses great risks for gender equality.

Moreover, policy dialogue between government mechanisms and CSOs over the 2030 Agenda was – and still remains – minimal; consultations over the national action plans were limited and, in many cases, no more than a pretext. Similarly, CSOs participation in the VNR was weak. Overall, there is no permanent mechanism that connects government bodies and CSOs and promotes dialogue; rather communications are fragmented and on an *ad hoc* basis.

Concerning citizen participation, there seems to be greater interest and awareness on topics related to the environment and climate but this does not necessarily translate into action by the citizens. For example, for the climate neutrality target, actions such as the establishment of energy communities in which the citizen is a co-owner of the climate should be established; similarly, strengthening energy democracy in practice, alleviating energy poverty, and supporting participatory engagement should be promoted. Adopted solutions need to respect the positions of the local community and the natural and cultural reserves of their territory. Such actions can give rise to cultural, social, and economic wealth, that belongs to all.

Furthermore, over the last few years there are initiatives where universities and the private sector collaborate promoting SDGs, not only as goals to be achieved but also as opportunities for the youth to be engaged professionally in various sectors. In this context, public awareness increases, and this also contributes to overcoming the negative perception that exists in the Greek society about the CSOs sector – despite its undisputable contribution to tackling health, poverty, environmental problems etc. - over issues of funds mismanagement or their engagement with sensitive issues such as refugee protection, LGBTQI etc.

Overall, citizen participation should be promoted through the provision of information to the public, while CSOs should be further engaged in the public debate for the achievement of SDGs. Such activities will increase public awareness over the SDGs in the Greek society, which is low in comparison to other EU countries.

Multi-state Partnerships

Achievement of SDGs require extensive partnerships among diverse actors so as to reach goals that no actor alone can achieve. While in the National Action Plans partnership initiatives are underlined, it is questionable whether a framework for cooperation and collaboration is set so as to overcome issues such as the lack of trust, the different organizational cultures, skills, mindsets and resources that hinder partnerships; in addition, it is doubtful whether government mechanisms have the know-how to coordinate such diverse actors. Another obstacle in setting up partnerships is that in many cases CSOs are not recognized by government bodies as partners nor their work is respected, forming an environment of distrust and suspiciousness. Moreover, we should bear in mind that till now such attempts were weak and fragmented, mainly among CSOs and usually in the context of funded programmes. However, it is positive that CSOs representatives have reported that there is evidence that specific Ministries are being more open to collaborations, attempting to establish linkages with CSOs.

Comments over the VNR

The VNR does not offer detailed information about how policy coherence for sustainable development will be achieved and misses to indicate the thematic and policy linkages between the existing legal and policy instruments (that regulate different areas of action). Also, no specific indicators are presented so as to measure the actual progress for the achievement of the goals. A more inclusive and intersectional approach was necessary as a cross cutting element for monitoring the progress on the SDGs. Moreover, the VNR mainly focuses on the achievement of the country's economic growth. In this respect, the social aspect of the issues under discussion is only being approached as a means towards economic growth. For example, for the SDG 4, there is no in-depth analysis on how the right to education is secured for all the children across the country, nor their specific background and personal situation are taken into consideration; rather it is linked with the labor market and its needs.

Similarly, the draft of the VNR was placed on the consultation platform for a very short period of time, while a prior consultation phase that had taken place earlier - where networks and national platforms had participated – was short and left limited time for deliberations.

Leave no one behind

While the discussion is now open (for example, through the consultation process and the subsequent adoption of the National Action plan for the LGBTQI community - despite its weaknesses - or the national action plan for Roma) towards the establishment of protection of vulnerable groups, still many groups - such as older people, women, migrants, persons with disabilities - are marginalized and at risk. A national plan for Ageing is yet to be seen, the older population - over 65 years old, being an ever-growing percentage in the population, 22.28% in 2020 – should be perceived not on a “cost” basis but as a resource; similarly, the neglected issue of integration of migrants in the Greek society was introduced lately at top level, but further actions are expected.

Recommendations

Greece has entered into a slow transition process over the achievement of SDGs, attempting to go from theory – adopting laws and national action plans - to practice and implementation. However, policies ownership and commitment by the Greek government are yet to be seen. The national action plans that were made public over the last two years - being one of the main policy tools for SDGs achievement – constitute a step forward. However, the public debate has highlighted several weaknesses of the national plans and the wider policy framework and various recommendations for the government could be made. In this context, the appointment of a *Permanent General Secretary* in the public administration responsible

for the implementation of SDGs policies would overcome political landscape changes that follow general elections and cause a gap in the policies implementation; similarly, when government changes, an updated status report should be published acting as a 'connecting bridge'. Political parties should reach agreements over main SDGs policies, thus setting up a long-term framework, while the Parliament should also enhance its engagement in the monitoring process, raise awareness of the public and the media, protect vulnerable groups, and encourage accountability.

Moreover, monitoring and evaluation are carried out by the same actor that supervises the implementation of policies. An independent Multi-Stakeholder institutionalized entity – or a task force - that would coordinate, monitor and evaluate progress of policies should be established where actors from the Government, the Civil Society and the private sector would participate and make recommendations over the SDGs policies, embedding knowledge and expertise into future planning, fostering implementation and effectiveness of actions plans. Evaluations should be frequent –every 6 or 12 months – and action plans should be revised and adapted to the dynamic conditions on the ground. Data collection should be enhanced by strengthening the ELSTAT and the CSOs' ability to gather information from the ground. Moreover, having a transparent and open framework would enhance accountability and induce partnerships among diverse actors; similarly, consultations over action plans and policies should be extended and deepen, rather than be used as pretext. Also, planning and implementation processes should be more participatory through the engagement of local authorities, CSOs and the private sector and linkages, communications and collaboration should be established. Concerning the CSOs, they should be further supported so as to increase organizations' capacity and effectiveness.

Research Methodology

Data collected for this report comes from three main sources. First, an online questionnaire was distributed among numerous CSOs, networks and coalitions of civil society in Greece through which advancements and issues in the implementation of SDGs in Greece are assessed. A sample of 30 organizations – covering all sectors of SDGs - submitted the questionnaire, including comments over the respected issues. Secondly, more than 7 working sessions/ meetings with CSOs representatives had taken place focusing on issues such as the national action plans for SDGs adopted in Greece, their implementation, the role of major stakeholders etc. Moreover, a series of semi-structured interviews with experts and representatives of CSOs and other bodies were conducted so as to acquire a holistic overview of SDGs in Greece. Furthermore, two online meetings with CSOs representatives and academics were held in the beginning of the research so as to lay down the main structure of the research.

PROGRESS AND FACTS ON THE 17 GOALS

Goal 1 End Poverty in all its forms everywhere

The pandemic and the energy crisis still have a severe negative effect on both the lives of millions of people and on the economy. In 2021, the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion amounted to 28.3% (2,971,200 people) of the country's population, compared to 19.6% in 2005. Specifically, Greece's GDP decreased severely during the economic crisis, a far cry from any EU country. According to EUROSTAT, 35.6% of Greek households are unable to pay their bills, while 39.6% cannot maintain their home, whether rented or owned. The 7.4% increase in house prices in 2019, followed by a larger increase in rents, was expected to reinforce poverty phenomena.

Goal 2 End Hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Food insecurity rate in Greece was 8.6% (2018-2020) compared to 7.6% in the high-income economies, while low-birth-weight was 8.7% compared to 7.6% in high-income economies. Another important element is the rate of anaemia among women of childbearing age, which was 15.1% in Greece for 2019 compared to 14.4% in high-income economies. These data suggest that there is hidden hunger/malnutrition or undernutrition or both.

It should be noted that in the Greek VNR no reference is being made to hunger rates in Greece nor to malnutrition. Rather, the focus is on obesity, which is more of a health issue and less a no hunger issue. This gives the impression that there is no hunger in Greece. Similarly, no reference is made to nutritional adequacy.

Goal 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Budgetary allocations from the national budget on health are still extremely low, a large part of the population still has no access to basic health services while understaffing and lack of equipment remain critical issues in this sector. A record number of deaths was recorded due to the pandemic while mental health problems increased significantly due to the pandemic.

Furthermore, the Greek VNR does not assess child or maternal health, nor the percentage of uninsured citizens, the percentage of deaths or damage to health from exposure to hazardous chemicals, which constitute indicators in sub-objectives of Objective 3. Ignoring the Status indicator in the National Health System means a deterioration in health status - particularly among the most vulnerable - resulting in not only health disorders or loss of health but also loss of well-being.

Goal 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

The legal and policy framework on education in Greece is subject to constant changes by the different governments that have been elected in the country at least for the last 40 years. Modernization of the educational system has always been the objective but there was not - and still there is - no consensus among the political parties about the educational system. The economic crisis had a great impact on the education sector in the country, in terms of securing the necessary funding for the operation of the school units and the provision of support for the students' population - that was severely affected by the recession policies – and overall, for the effective operation of the school system. Reform attempts were under the criticism and faced resistance. Fragmented legal and policy interventions undercover the lack of a wide strategic vision by the Greek State. No action plan has been adopted and the way the SDGs are mainstreamed in education is rather vague. Although the skills' labs (εργαστήρια δεξιοτήτων) and the respective platform provide the teachers with the tools and the knowledge that are necessary to familiarize the students with the SDGs, the approach is not uniform in the Greek school system. At time being, the narrative on innovation, modernization and structural reforms that are attempted by the Greek State do not seem to meet the actual needs of the teachers and the students. Legislative measures that have been introduced during the pandemic have been heavily criticized for impairing the already weakened (by the economic crisis) school system. Access to schools is not guaranteed for all the children in the country; refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities and others with special learning needs face critical barriers while the gender perspective is not mainstreamed. Additionally, the support provided to teachers is not adequate despite the fact that the teachers' role is especially critical in the modern school system as they need to respond to multiple challenges inside the school environment. Furthermore, lack of data in the education system is severe, a fact that has a negative impact on the assessment of the actual needs, the design and implementation of policies.

Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

According to the EIGE' s gender equality index, Greece holds the lowest position among the EU member states. Similarly, in the 2022 World Economic Forum report, Greece ranks 100th , while at European level Greece comes last. Gender mainstreaming is not embedded in national policies in a uniform way. For example, the gender pay gap in Greece is 12.5% while the EU average is 16%. This applies to both the private sector, to a larger extent, but also to the public sector. The employment rate for women is 49% (the EU average is 67.4%) while for

men is 70.1%. The rate of women taking up leadership positions remains low. One in four managerial positions are held by women with the EU average being 3 in 4. Moreover, the increasing femicide rate in Greece makes evident that the elimination of violence against women and girls has a long way to go. While improvement has been noted in access to women's preventive health, distribution of proper information and awareness of these tests should be a priority

At the policy level, Greece adopted its second National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGE) (2021-2025) in 2021, essentially setting a roadmap for the promotion of gender equality. However, numerous gaps and weaknesses have been identified in the NAPGE 2021-2025, specifically: a) The NAPGE falls short in taking concrete action to prevent gender-based violence, b) The NAPGE also fails to address the intensifying social and economic consequences of COVID-19, c) it lacks robust data and scientific documentation, d) no reference is made to an inter-ministerial committee that would coordinate the actions of the individual ministries and other actors, e) It fails, at its conception, to engage and include a wide spectrum of representatives from Greek Civil Society, f) The NAPGE fails to clearly define some target groups facing intense and/or multiple discrimination, g) no reference is made to the intersection and interaction of gender inequalities with the climate crisis, an intersection that is at the top of the global policy and development agenda, h) There is no defined accountability mechanism -it is unclear who is accountable for implementing proposed actions and there are no allocated human/financial resources for specific actions envisaged, i) it largely fails to address the issue of gender financing and investment gaps in entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, a positive trend is observed as an increasing number of NGOs focuses on the promotion of gender equality. These are mostly active in 4 distinct areas: gender-based violence, economic empowerment and leadership, migrant and refugee women, and gender-responsive education. Moreover, there are also more organizations focusing on gender issues faced by LGBTQ+ femininities, women with disabilities etc. while other organizations are increasingly mainstreaming gender equality across their portfolio and recognize the promotion of gender equality as a key priority.

Goal 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Water management policy is almost non-existent. Significant problems are expected to arise with the privatisation of water companies in terms of both quality and price. Sub-objectives 6.3 and 6.6 are significantly problematic

Goal 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

The war in Ukraine has changed considerably the energy landscape in Europe and all over the world. Till the burst of war, notable steps had been taken such as: promoting RE investments, e-mobility, energy efficiency and energy storage. Important announcements had also been made about supporting municipalities to tackle energy poverty through the establishment of energy communities. However, after the burst of the war, the agenda has changed and rather than focusing on environmental issues, the issue is now over energy security. Energy poverty in the EU is expected to increase significantly, while other steps previously taken – such as the lignite phase-out and decarbonization process – are being reversed.

Goal 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

While Greece has managed to recover from the economic crisis, the pandemic has its toll on economic growth; in addition, the war in Ukraine is expected to affect negatively the economy and worsen conditions for millions of people. For the time being, unemployment in Greece is 12,3% and is the second highest in the EU (EU average 6%). However, youth unemployment (under the age of 25 years) in Greece is extremely high, 29,5%, the highest in the EU (EU average 13,6%) and long-term unemployment is 66,5%, (highest in EU, EU average 35,2%). Vulnerable groups (for example, people with disabilities, migrants) should be supported so as to ensure their well-being and integration. To ensure such challenges strategic investments should be made in human capital, infrastructure and innovation. The National Plan for the circular economy (revised in 2021) and the new strategic investment framework (law 4864/2021) are some of the tools expected to induce investments and foster growth.

Goal 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Infrastructure has a positive impact on the achievement of the economic, social and political goals; on the other hand, inadequate infrastructure leads to the inability to access markets, work, information and education and is a serious obstacle to business activities. In this context, various initiatives have been taken so as to induce infrastructure and industrialization. For example, the legislative framework for the Circular Economy has been adopted, but in practice further steps have not been taken.

Moreover, a national broadband plan has been set up, aiming at the expansion of broadband access, while a National Strategy for Industry (2021) was introduced while a National Strategy for Research and Innovation is yet to be seen.

Goal 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries

Within Greece, income inequality is significant and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Income inequality is the fourth highest in the EU with 20% of the top earners receiving more than six times the income of the bottom 20%. Income inequalities increase inequalities over food, education, equal opportunities for welfare, entertainment and intensify discrimination, cultural, racial, or religious.

Moreover, Greece has to take various steps over migration issues and population mobility. Apart from improving living conditions for migrants and implementing integration policies, Greece has been accused of carrying out pushbacks of migrants at its border with Turkey. In this context, the European Court of Human Rights issued a ruling over practices of pushing boats of asylum seekers back to Turkey.

Goal 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Spatial planning is at a critical crossroads: The Local Urban Plans run the risk of being used as tools to provide excessively generous building rights and increase urban expansion, create business parks and overall, promote a fragmented planning development and limit environmental protection to “Natura 2000” sites only. To avoid such an advancement, the following decisive factors should be taken under consideration: a) the delimitation and protection/management of landscapes (manmade and natural), the protection of rural areas, and the decisive restriction of off-plan building, all three issues treated by the IFC. The binding guidelines of the current 2008 National Spatial Plan are a valuable guide and its omission from the Local Urban Plans’ specifications constitute a grave setback, as the relevant legislation no longer contains any planning objectives other than simplifying and speeding up processes. Moreover, it is necessary to systematically monitor and issue guidelines to reinforce a planning approach that seeks to establish a sustainable spatial model, to favor productive restructuring, and promote climate crisis mitigation. The participation of scientific bodies and experienced staff in the monitoring scheme will be valuable in many ways.

Goal 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Particular delays are met in actions for sub-objectives 12.3 (halving of per capita food waste produced worldwide, at retail and consumer level), 12.4 (failure to address air pollutants and odours, e.g. West Attica, West Thessaloniki, Volos), 12.5 (reducing waste production), 12.8 (lack of awareness of sustainable development and a lifestyle in harmony with nature), 12.b (lack of promotion of AGENDA 2030 and sustainable tourism)

Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

A new National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) with ambitious targets for the deployment of Renewables was approved and is already being revised in order to comply with the revised EU climate and energy targets as well as with targets set in the new national climate law. Similarly, Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plans are being developed. However, the climate law has no provisions on the participation of citizens/civil society (climate assemblies) and no phaseout date for fossil fuel explorations is set, while no reference is being made to energy communities. Overall, more efforts should be put to pursue climate neutrality by 2040. It should be noted that Greece's contribution to the international climate finance - under the UNFCCC framework - should be increased

Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Little progress is being made in this goal. Greece has committed to increase MPAs (marine protected areas) to 30% by 2030, designating as no-take reserves. However, this is only a political commitment and no clear action is in place. Great interest from civil society is noted.

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

Since 2018 several steps have been taken on the management of natural areas. This is particularly the case following the establishment of the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency. However, there are still weaknesses as some legislative initiatives have undermined protection measures. Still, there is a political commitment to protect specific areas/mountains securing that no new roads and other infrastructure will be built. On the other hand, minimal progress is noted on the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy, while the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan has not been updated. Overall nature policy is characterized by weak implementation and delays (e.g. the completion of Special Environmental Studies and Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites, finalizing forest maps, implementation of National Forest Strategy, list of invasive species) leading even to rulings against Greece by the ECJ. NGOs remain active in nature protection.

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

While some steps were made over the last years, such as the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security that was made public, further actions are yet to be seen especially in the justice system, which is well-known for its severe weaknesses, such as delays and malfunctioning. Moreover, the National Action Plan to fight corruption is yet to be published. It should be noted that according to the Special Eurobarometer Report (No. 523, March-April 2022) 98% of the population in Greece think that corruption is widespread in the country, while 59% feel personally affected by corruption. On the other hand, various setbacks have been taken place over the last few years, such as the prosecution of journalists investigating corruption issues, the pretext consultations with CSOs.

Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development