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## Sustainable development in Austria: mostly positive; problems notably in environment domains

### 80% of SDG indicators develop positively, 20% negatively

Vienna, 2023-04-18 – For the period 2010 to 2021, most of the indicators that provide information on the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Austria point in the right direction. With just under 20% of the 83 indicators assessed showing a negative development. This is the result of the third “Agenda 2030: SDG Indicators Report” by Statistics Austria, which serves to monitor the 17 social, ecological and economic sustainability goals.

“Austria has made important progress towards the sustainability goals in the years 2010 to 2021: There was a positive development in 67 of 83 assessable sustainability indicators. In the area of social sustainability, the share of people affected by poverty and regularly unable to afford major purchases or holidays has decreased significantly and, at 1.8%, is far below the EU average of 6.3%. Income inequality is also slightly declining in Austria. There is a need to catch up in terms of the gender pay gap, which has continuously decreased in recent years, but is still clearly above the European average. There are still major challenges in the area of ecological sustainability: the share of renewable energies has increased from 31.2% in 2010 to 36.4% in 2021, but high greenhouse gas emissions, energy and material consumption as well as land use make it difficult to achieve the sustainability goals,” says Statistics Austria Director General Tobias Thomas.

#### **Austria is on the right track with many targets**

The current national monitoring report of the UN 2030 Agenda measures the development of the Sustainable Development Goals in Austria using specific indicators. Looking at the development of the SDG indicators from 2010 to 2021, 67 of a total of 83 assessable sustainability indicators in Austria show a positive or very positive trend. However, 16 indicators are not yet developing in the desired direction.

#### **Food security, health, education and economy show (moderate) progress**

The share of organic farmland – an indicator assigned to the “zero hunger” goal – increased significantly in recent years from 18.4% (2010) to 25.3% (2021). Austria thus has by far the largest share of organic farms in the EU in terms of area. For the goal “good health and well-being”, indicators such as alcohol-associated deaths or daily cigarette consumption are declining, and in the education sector, indicators such as lifelong learning and the university graduation rate developed positively. Looking at the goal “decent work and economic growth”, real GDP per capita shows a growth of 4.2% in the year 2021 after a strong decline in the corona year 2020 (–6.9%) and a moderate positive trend overall. The “gender equality” goal shows, that although the wage gap between women and men is steadily narrowing, the gender pay gap of 18.9% (2020) remains well above the European average of 13.0% (2020). Official development assistance is located in the “Partnerships for the Goals” objective and decreased between 2010 and 2021, which was negatively assessed in the report.

#### **Austria needs to catch up on some environmental indicators**

In accordance with the “affordable and clean energy” goal, the share of renewable energy sources has increased significantly since 2010 (31.2%) to 36.4% for 2021. On the other hand, overall energy consumption has also increased and thus receives a negative trend rating. Material consumption, reported in the

“responsible consumption and production” target, increased somewhat in the period 2010 to 2020 and is accordingly given a moderate negative rating. National greenhouse gas emissions, anchored in the “climate action” goal, are generally at a high level, but have a decreasing trend from 84.1 million t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents (2010) to 77.1 million t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents (2021, preliminary value). Accordingly, the assessment of the development is moderately positive.

The land consumption assigned to the goal “sustainable cities and communities” did not develop in the desired direction in terms of sustainability: The land consumption for construction, transport, and recreation and excavation areas increased by 10.6% from 2010 to 2021. Sealed areas increased by 10.1% in the same period.

### **Some targets have already been achieved, but data are not available for all areas**

In many areas, the globally targeted development standard has long been achieved nationally: These include, for example, access to safe drinking water or a reliable supply of energy, as well as basic health care and a collection rate for municipal waste that is 100%. Extreme poverty and hunger are also hardly statistically existent in Austria. Overall, 29 of the 126 targets can be considered achieved.

The report also reveals significant data gaps where monitoring of target achievement is not possible. At the target level, 17 key targets cannot even be measured due to a lack of suitable data from official data sources – including, among others, the targets on reducing food losses or reducing illicit financial and arms flows. The target of ending abuse and violence against children is also currently not measurable due to lack of data.

At the data level, 83 indicators could be evaluated because a correspondingly long time series is available and the normatively desired target direction is fixed. For 37 other indicators, either only individual data years are available or the desired target direction could not be clearly defined, so that no trend evaluation was possible.

For detailed results and further information please refer to [website](#).

**Information on methodology, definitions:** The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2015. All 193 UN member states committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global, national and regional levels by 2030. In Austria, all federal ministries were tasked with implementing the 2030 Agenda by the Council of Ministers’ decision of 12 January 2016. To monitor the SDGs’ development, Statistics Austria developed a first version of a national indicator set in 2017, which has been continuously developed since then and currently comprises around 200 indicators. The 2030 Agenda contains 17 goals, to which 169 targets are assigned. The latter are divided into 126 thematic targets and 43 means of implementation. The latter primarily concern the implementation of goals with a focus on developing countries and are therefore largely neglected in this report.

An assessment of the trend is made according to Eurostat’s assessment mode. Four stages are used to determine the extent to which the indicators are approaching or moving away from a normatively desired (rising or falling) development. For this purpose, an average annual rate of change is calculated according to the value of the start year (2010) and end year (2021). A time series of at least ten years must be available for the assessment, and the end year must be 2020 or 2021. Data for intermediate years are not necessary in Eurostat’s methodology. For this report, a selection of the evaluated indicators was made according to statistical criteria such as availability of the time series, relevance, quality of content, comprehensibility or international comparability.

#### **If you have any questions on this topic, please contact:**

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