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Austria is making progress in sustainable development

85 % of the SDG indicators develop in a positive direction; land consumption or biodiversity show a need to catch up

Vienna, 2024-06-17 – Austria made progress on 85% of the indicators for the development of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Yet, almost 15% of the 148 assessed indicators show a negative trend. These are the results of the fourth “Agenda 2030: SDG Indicator Report” on the monitoring of the 17 social, ecological and economic Sustainable Development Goals by Statistics Austria.

“Austria has made good progress towards the UN goals for environmental, social and economic sustainability since 2010. 85% of the 148 assessable indicators have developed positively by 2022. For example, the proportion of organically farmed land has risen to 26.4%, the proportion of renewable energy has increased to more than a third and energy consumption has fallen in the wake of the energy price crisis. Challenges include increased land consumption in the environmental sector and the gender pay gap, which has steadily decreased in recent years but remains well above the European average. The results of the SDG indicator report will also be included in the ‘Voluntary National Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals’ that Austria will present as part of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2024,” says Tobias Thomas, Director General of Statistics Austria.

Austria is on the right track for many sub-goals

The report on the national monitoring of the UN 2030 Agenda measures the development of the sustainability goals in Austria using specific indicators. In contrast to previous reports, all 218 substantive indicators contained in the national SDG tables were currently evaluated in the evaluation process: 148 indicators could be evaluated (including multiple entries). 70 indicators could not be evaluated, often because the time series went back less than ten years. From 2010 to 2022, the development was positive or very positive for most of the evaluated indicators (126; 85.1%). 22 (14.9%) did not develop in the desired direction.

Progress in food security, health, education and economy

The share of organic farmland – an indicator of Goal 2 “Zero Hunger” – increased significantly from 18.6% (2010) to 26.4% (2022). This means that Austria has by far the largest proportion of organically farmed agricultural land in the EU. In Goal 3 “Good Health and Well-Being”, indicators such as average alcohol consumption or daily cigarette consumption are declining. In the field of education, indicators such as lifelong learning and the rate of university graduates developed very positively. For Goal 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, the real gross domestic product per capita showed a growth of 3.8% and 3.6% for 2021 and 2022 respectively and a moderately positive trend overall following the sharp decline in the coronavirus year 2020 (–7.1%). Goal 5 “Gender Equality” shows that although the pay gap between women and men is continuously decreasing, in 2022, the gender pay gap of 18.4% is still well above the European average of 12.7%.

Public spending on official development assistance – part of Goal 17 “Partnerships for the Goals” – showed an increase from 0.32% to 0.39% of the gross national income between 2010 and 2022, leading to a very positive trend. However, the expenditure for development assistance to the least developed countries fell from 0.06% in 2010 to 0.03% of the gross national income in 2022, resulting in a very negative evaluation.

Improved development in environmental indicators due to energy crisis

The warmer weather, but also the massive rise of energy and fuel prices as a result of the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, pushed the energy consumption in Austria in 2022 almost back to the pandemic low level of 2020. This led to consistently positive trend assessments in Goal 7 “Affordable and Clean Energy”. At 1 066 petajoules, the total energy consumption in 2022 was below the 2010 figure of 1 116 petajoules. The share of renewable energy sources increased from 31.2% (2010) to 33.8% (2022). The material consumption, which is part of Goal 12 “Sustainable consumption and production”, also decreased in the period from 2010 to 2022, resulting in a positive trend assessment. The national greenhouse gas emissions, which are part of Goal 13 “Climate Protection Measures”, are generally at a high level but show a downwards trend from 84.8 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents (2010) to 72.8 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents (2022). Thus, the assessment of the development is very positive.

The land consumption allocated to the Goal 11 “Sustainable Cities and Municipalities” did not develop in the desired direction in terms of sustainability. Land consumption for construction, transportation or leisure areas increased by 11.3% from 2010 to 2021. In the same period sealed surfaces increased by 11.1%.

Further challenges in ecological and social sustainability

Further negative trends were reported, for example, for the biodiversity indicator “Common Farmland Bird Index”, which experienced a significant decline to an index value of 60.5 (2021, 2010: 70.3). In the social sustainability goals, the proportion of young adults who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEET) rose from 7.4% (2010) to 8.1% (2022) and, thus, did not develop in the desired direction. Moreover, the risk of poverty, which is reported in Goal 10 “Reduce Inequality within and between Countries” with several threshold values, also shows slightly negative trends between 2010 and 2022, depending on the threshold value. Trust in the political system measured on a scale from 0 to 10 initially rose from 4.4 (2010) to a high of 5.8 (2020) and fell to 4.0 (2022) most recently, indicating overall a slightly negative trend.

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

In many fields, the globally targeted development standard has long since been achieved nationally: this includes, for example, access to safe drinking water and a reliable supply of energy as well as basic healthcare or a collection rate for municipal waste of 100%. Extreme poverty and hunger are also hardly statistically verifiable in Austria. Overall, the report shows target achievement for 31 targets (or relevant parts of it).

The report also reveals important data gaps. 13 key targets cannot be measured at all due to a lack of suitable data from official data sources – including e.g. the targets for reducing food losses or reducing illicit financial and arms flows.

For detailed results and further information as well as the detailed report on the SDGs please refer to our [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 260 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 (2022). A time series of at least ten years must be available for the assessment, and the end year must be 2021 or 2022. 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.

The current SDG indicator report, which Statistics Austria prepared on behalf of the Federal Chancellery, makes a significant contribution to the monitoring of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals in Austria. The chapter on progress towards the goals will be included in the second “Voluntary National Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals” (FNU), which Austria will present at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2024.

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