

Austria's second Voluntary National Review – Main Messages

Austria's second Voluntary National Review was compiled during multiple global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. In the global "Sustainable Development Report 2023", Austria ranks fifth out of 166 for SDG implementation. However, the report also shows that action is still needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda, including additional efforts for SDGs 12, 13, and 15. While Austria still consumes a high level of resources, efficiency gains in recent years offer a promising trend.

Thus, Austria has aligned its report along the question: *"What transformations towards sustainability are needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda goals?"* with the following highlighted considerations:

- Austria's "mainstreaming" approach to the SDGs has proven itself: A transparent and participatory **multi-stakeholder process** was continued through various cooperation formats over 15 months. Austria also advanced the collaboration with science: the interdisciplinary "UniNEtZ" project involving around 300 scientists presented 950 concrete measures for SDG implementation.
- A **solid database** from the national statistics office was developed, data gaps closed with the support of universities, and data positioned as a central element in this report.
- Three **intersectional priorities** for transformation were included throughout the VNR: gender equality, the youth's perspective, and the international dimension.

The common European framework and EU guidelines are guiding principles for implementation in Austria. Following the three pillars of sustainability - environmental, economic, and social - the report has three main topics:

Leaving no one behind – social cohesion and solidarity in times of multiple crises:

- Anyone may experience a predicament, but people in vulnerable situations are hit harder by multiple crises than others. In Austria, people affected by poverty and social exclusion can rely on a well-developed welfare state. It encourages transformation through solidarity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities so that "no one is left behind".
- Families, children and young people are supported with the "Frühe Hilfen" and "Schulstartklar!" programmes.
- The "National Action Plan on Disability II" paves the way for numerous measures implementing the UN CRDP.
- "Gender budgeting" is promoted for gender equality. Additionally, measures tackling gender-based violence and online hate speech legislation were passed.
- To meet the increasing demand for long-term care, two comprehensive reform packages and "Community Nursing" were introduced.

Skills for 2030 – competences for sustainable development:

- Skills which foster personal, interdisciplinary and interpersonal competences are crucial for the envisioned transformations for the 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Digital skills and media & information literacy – the foundation for sustainable, inclusive digitalisation – create opportunities for the economy and labour market.
- Companies play a key role in further training in "Skills for 2030".

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- To address the shortage of skilled workers, the dual vocational training system is strengthened by increasing the training quality and training opportunities
- Active labour market policies are improving employment opportunities for jobseekers, providing target group-specific training opportunities, and creating employment incentives.
- Skills for "Responsible Business Conduct" are essential for achieving SDGs globally.

Protecting the biosphere – sustainable development within planetary boundaries:

- Accelerated action in climate and environmental protection is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable transformation. Austria has taken important steps by promoting climate protection and adaptation measures as well as a wide range of measures for the energy- and mobility transitions.
- An important basis for this is, inter alia, the implemented "eco-social tax reform", which introduced both CO₂-pricing and a climate bonus.
- Ambitious targets and measures for renewable energy and the expansion of the electricity infrastructure were also adopted.
- Significant steps were taken to tackle the mobility transition, in particular the nationwide "Climate Ticket" for public transport and record investments in railway infrastructure.
- To secure the protection of Austria's nature and biodiversity the "Biodiversity Strategy Austria 2030+" and the establishment of the Biodiversity Fund lay an important foundation.
- A key SDG of the 2030 Agenda and goal of the Austrian circular economy strategy is the establishment of a climate-neutral, sustainable circular economy.

Through this VNR Austria renews its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its goals. To achieve these, Austria intends to implement the above-mentioned transformations, which all depend on an indispensable, rules-based multilateral system as a foundation.

The partnership principle enshrined in SDG 17 is a catalyst to achieving the sustainable development goals and overcoming challenges ahead. In this spirit of cooperation, Austria has significantly increased its funding for development cooperation, international climate financing and humanitarian aid.