

# Is the UNECE region on track for 2030?

## Assessment, stories and insights





UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE



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## Foreword

Since signing up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development more than five years ago, UNECE countries have taken action to integrate the goals and targets into their national development plans and made progress towards achieving them. Actions at the regional level support this process through focused international exchanges and peer learning on policy solutions, best practices and challenges. For this, countries come together at the annual Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in the UNECE region (Geneva, 17-18 March 2021), which highlights the importance of the regional perspective in follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As mandated by its member States, UNECE informs these discussions through an annual report. The present second UNECE regional report on Sustainable Development Goals assesses the situation with implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and provides insights to the actions taken at regional and national levels. The UNECE Statistical Division led the preparation of the report. The report is enriched with stories and insights from 15 United Nations agencies and country teams participating in the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia.

The report identifies the targets on which the overall progress in the region was good, and shows that in most areas progress needs to accelerate by 2030. It also identifies the few areas where the course needs to be reversed, and presents insights of how change can be achieved through actions on the country and regional levels.

The Covid pandemic is bringing about a major setback across multiple Sustainable Development Goals, at least in the short term. The region faces significant challenges to maintain progress, and to accelerate or reverse trends where required. In this context, the commitment to the 2030 Agenda requires intensified efforts to find suitable policy solutions in the new circumstances. These new challenges remind us again of the strong need for international cooperation and solidarity as it would help us find the solutions and promote those that work well. UNECE stands to support countries in combining their efforts in overcoming the pandemic crisis and to promote inclusive and sustainable development in the region.



Olga Algayerova  
UNECE Executive Secretary

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
The regional dimension of implementing the 2030 Agenda.....	5
Assessment .....	5
Stories.....	6
Data.....	6
<b>Progress in the UNECE region</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Is the UNECE region on track for 2030? .....	7
Consequences of the pandemic.....	9
<b>Stories</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Key messages.....	11
Increased risk of poverty in the pandemic .....	14
Contributing to the reduction of rural poverty through investments in farming in Georgia.....	17
Kyrgyzstan: Stunting falling, but more progress needed .....	19
Changemakers in Serbia: Women with disability championing sexual and reproductive health.....	21
Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services during the Covid pandemic in Tajikistan.....	23
Turkmenistan is leaving no one behind in essential vaccination .....	26
How has health care adapted to the pandemic?.....	28
Consequences of the pandemic on gender inequalities in domestic and care work and on economic security in Eastern Europe and Central Asia .....	31
Creating bonds between generations to overcome challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.....	34
Closing the gap for older people.....	36
International migrants in the SDGs.....	37
New SDG indicator on refugees in the UNECE region.....	39
The share of outward foreign direct investment and manufacturing in UNECE economies is declining .....	41
The Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP): the case of Ukraine .....	44
Every child has the right to be protected from violence.....	46
Improving national capacity to measure SDGs .....	48
Population censuses to take place in every UNECE country around 2020 .....	50
<b>Technical notes on the progress assessment</b> .....	<b>53</b>
Data .....	53
Assessment measure .....	53
Estimation and aggregation.....	53
Target values .....	54
Indicators used in the assessment.....	55

# Introduction

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## The regional dimension of implementing the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the pivotal role of the regional dimension in implementation, follow-up and review. Actions at the regional level bridge the global and national levels, and provide the necessary focus for international exchanges of experience and peer learning. All five United Nations regional commissions annually organize regional forums for sustainable development. In the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which comprises 56 countries of Europe, North America and Central Asia, [the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development](#) will be held the fifth time this year (Geneva, 17-18 March 2021), to share policy solutions, best practices and challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

All the United Nations regional commissions disseminate knowledge and data on the SDGs through designated platforms. In the UNECE region, information on activities and resources on SDGs have been made available through the UNECE [Knowledge Hub](#). The [Dashboard](#) and [Database](#) with the latest data on global SDG indicators for UNECE countries were launched in early 2020, with a Russian interface added recently. UNECE provides guidance to national statistical offices and has been regularly updating a Road Map<sup>1</sup> to guide countries on how to set up and manage a system for providing statistics and indicators for SDGs.

The 68<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 9-10 April 2019), the governing body of UNECE, requested the Secretariat “to publish a yearly report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region to support the discussions at the sessions of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development”. The UNECE Statistical Division led the preparation of the first such report in 2020<sup>2</sup> as well as the present second report, prepared to inform the 2021 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region.

## Assessment

The report provides assessment of progress and stories on how regional and country-level actions relate to sustainable development outcomes. The progress assessment is based on a methodology developed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)<sup>3</sup> and now used by all five United Nations regional commissions. Technical notes at the end of this report explain the methodology used.

The assessment covers every goal and target for which there are data and looks at the trends at the regional level only. As the previous, 2020 report on the UNECE region<sup>2</sup> showed, variation among countries is significant in all areas and a trend in a country may differ from the general trend observed in the region.

The assessment relies on the data available in the United Nations Global SDG Indicators Database as of 18 February 2021, almost all of which pertain to the time before the Covid pandemic. The changes that

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<sup>1</sup> [UNECE \(2017\). Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals. Geneva: United Nations.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UNECE \(2020\). Towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the UNECE region: a statistical portrait of progress and challenges. Geneva: United Nations.](#)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2020). [Annex 2 – Technical notes](#). Pp 73-77 in [Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report 2020](#). Bangkok: United Nations.

the pandemic has inflicted on the trajectory of progress cannot yet be quantified in this assessment. Reference is made to the possible effects of the pandemic on specific targets or goals and to the emerging evidence on this.

## Stories

The United Nations organizations and country teams participating in the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia provided 17 stories which enrich this report. The stories provide a closer look at how various regional and country level actions relate to sustainable development outcomes. Anchored in data, the insights from these stories help understand the ways that change can be achieved. Many stories address the challenges brought by the pandemic and measure their impact.

## Data

The 2030 Agenda cannot be fulfilled without relevant and timely statistics to track progress. Data are needed for understanding the overall levels of progress, for designing and monitoring the results and impact of policy actions, as well as for identifying areas, groups or regions that risk being left behind.

The regional assessment presented in this report relies on the global indicator framework for SDGs<sup>4</sup> and the available data on UNECE countries in [the United Nations Global SDG Indicators Database](#) as of 18 February 2021. While the scope of data in the Global SDG Database has greatly increased in recent years, coverage remains weak in many areas. The progress assessment shows that under several goals, data in the UNECE region are available for less than a third of the globally agreed indicators, and many targets cannot be assessed because of lack of data. In all, sufficient national data to track change over time are available for only 121 (49 per cent) of the 247 global monitoring indicators and for 89 (53 per cent) of the 169 targets. Technical notes about the assessment, including a complete list of the used indicators, are presented in the end of this report.

Investing in data remains crucial for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, even in countries with well-developed statistical systems. While statistical data collection was negatively impacted by the restrictions that the pandemic imposed, the new situation also accelerated trends that were well under way throughout the UNECE region in modernising the statistical work. The national statistical offices that had already advanced with innovation and modernisation turned out to be better prepared to meet the challenges caused by the pandemic.

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