

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE MEDITERRANEAN IS STILL LAGGING BEHIND.  
THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION AT THE 49<sup>TH</sup> POSITION IN THE WORLD RANKING, WHILE  
ITALY AT THE 30<sup>TH</sup>.**

**A CONCRETE HELP CAN BE GIVEN BY THE RISE OF MED HUBS FOR SUSTAINABLE  
TRANSFORMATIONS.**

- *The Sustainable Development Report on 23 Mediterranean countries notes a few steps forward but no country is still on the right track. Governments, industry, citizens and stakeholders must strive to bridge the gap between recommendations, good practices and concrete actions. Italy ranks 30<sup>th</sup> out of 193 countries surveyed.*
- *From the pool of experts comes an operational proposal: to create centers of excellence to monitor sustainable development levels, disseminate solutions and good practices in the Mediterranean.*

The report produced by SDSN e SDSN Med presented today at the “Third Sustainability Summit - for South-East Europe and the Mediterranean” (16-17 October) in Athens, organized by The Economist.

10.16.2019 – Four years after the adoption of the Paris Agreement and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), no Mediterranean country is on the right path to reach adequate levels of sustainability. In its effort towards the 17 Goals, the Mediterranean region is positioned at the 49th position in the world ranking with an overall index of 71.6, while Italy is at the 30th.

This is what emerges from the 2019 *Sustainable Development Report - Mediterranean Countries Edition*, presented at the “Third Sustainability Summit - for South-East Europe and the Mediterranean” (16-17 October), held in Athens organized by The Economist. The report, which is the result of the joint work of the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network* and the *Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the Mediterranean Area* (SDSN Med), hosted by Santa Chiara Lab - University of Siena, analyzes the level of progress for 23 countries of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin towards SDGs, in order to facilitate the reading and interpretation of the SDG index reached by the countries examined. The overall aim is to foster the implementation of common transformation strategies and actions that can concretely lead to a sustainable development of the region.

The Mediterranean edition is a concise and complementary review of the fourth edition of the 2019 Sustainable Development Report produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and Bertelsmann Stiftung (June 2019), which represents the first worldwide study to assess the position of each of the 193 UN Member States with respect to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), starting from over 100 statistical indicators. The Mediterranean edition shows weak progress in the pursuit of each Goal, especially in reference to some specific issues: excellent results are recorded with regard to **Goal 1** indicating a positive progress towards the end of poverty and **Goals 3 and 4**, which report net improvements on the health and well-being of the populations and on quality education. On the contrary, negative results are recorded on SDGs 2 (No Hunger), 5 (Gender Equality), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructures) and 14 (Life below Water).

Faced with the scenario outlined by the analysis, the experts provide some recommendations and requests for concrete actions including:

- Clearly improve policies aimed at spreading more sustainable agricultural practices and awareness campaigns to promote healthier diets, for example in line with the traditional Mediterranean diet.
- Promote actions to support and improve the integration of women at all levels of society.

- Increase public and private investment in research and innovation aimed at sustainable development.
- Give priority to the conservation of biodiversity of rivers and seas threatened by human impact.

In order to facilitate the interaction between the scientific approach and the policies, the experts have also launched an operational proposal: the creation of centers of excellence with the task of monitoring SDGs and spreading solutions and good practices with the aim of orienting policies on the Goals and assessing their impacts.

The proposal stems from the six transformations outlined in the 2019 Sustainable Development Report (UN SDSN) and also applied to the analysis of the Mediterranean, which show the implementation of the SDGs in terms of six major transformations, each of which contributes to promoting and guiding strategies and actions of cooperation towards the implementation of the various SDGs: “Sustainable Food, Land, Water and Oceans”; “Energy Decarbonisation and Sustainable Industry”; “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, “Health, Wellbeing and Demography”, “Education, Gender and Inequality”, “Harnessing the Digital Revolution for Sustainable Development”.

For each of the six transformations a center of excellence will be identified with the task of monitoring the progress of individual countries and collecting information useful for selecting and disseminating the most effective solutions and replicable good practices in the Mediterranean region. For Italy, the Santa Chiara Lab of the University of Siena will be the reference hub in the promotion and implementation of the transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems and biodiversity conservation; the ATHENA Research and Innovation Center (SDSN-Greece) will be the reference hub for “Energy Decarbonisation and Sustainable Industry”, while the Cyprus Institute (SDSN-Cyprus) for “Sustainable Cities and Communities”. Other groups of experts will be identified to manage and promote actions for the other three transformations: “Health, Wellbeing and Demography”, “Education, Gender and Inequality” and “Harnessing the Digital Revolution for Sustainable Development”.

“Four years after the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement” declares **Jeffrey Sachs Director Sustainable Development Solutions Network** “no Mediterranean country is yet on track to meeting all the goals. Gradual progress and policy changes will not be enough. Deep transformations to achieve the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement are feasible, necessary, and urgent.

We need leadership, by governments, businesses, citizens and all the stakeholders in the Mediterranean region to move this great region, a beloved and ancient home of humanity, to prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. And we need the leadership of the Mediterranean regions to help convince all nations of the world to act with the needed urgency”.

*“The centers of excellence, the MED Hubs” explains **Angelo Riccaboni, Director SDSN Med and Chair Santa Chiara Lab – University of Siena** “are born with the aim of guiding the implementation of the six transformations to translate Sustainable Development Goals into virtuous behavior and concrete solutions. SDSN Mediterranean, with the Santa Chiara Lab of the University of Siena, will be the reference hub for the sustainability of the agri-food sector and biodiversity: an important challenge in the knowledge that agrifood systems have a strong impact on the Sustainable Development Goals and that they represent one of the key pillars on which governments have to act. The role of this center will be crucial in the adoption and promotion of authentic processes of innovation and transformation capable of declining sustainability and profitability of the agri-food sector and favoring virtuous practices both for the protection of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and for a sustainable use of the soil”.*

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#### Detail data for each SDG

The progressive loss of biodiversity is one of the main problems, with particular reference to marine waters (Mediterranean average: **Goal 14 – “Life below Water”** - 46.9), but also to the characteristics of land (**Goal 15 – “Life on Land”** - 68.2). Gender (**Goal 5 – “Gender Equality”** - 58.7) and social (**Goal 10 – “Reduced Inequalities”** - 60.9)

inequalities are persistent even in European countries. Problems related to improper dietary habits of the population are alarming, with obesity rates constantly increasing even among the youngest, especially in the south-east coast, and unsustainable agricultural practices with negative effects on the environment and on the soil (**Goal 2 – “Zero Hunger”** - 56.6). Investments and actions to promote industrial innovations and infrastructures are still limited and inadequate (**Goal 9 – “Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructures”** - 47.5). Furthermore, responsible consumption and production trends are still lagging behind, with obvious social and environmental implications (**Goal 12 – “Responsible Consumption and Production”** - 69.7).

A much better picture is obtained in relation to the policies implemented by the Mediterranean countries in the context of **Goal 1 (“No poverty”** - 96.4), **Goal 3 (“Good health and Well-Being”** - 82.6) and **Goal 4 (“Quality Education”**- 88.7) which indicate an adequate level of attention in these priority sectors. Good results were also achieved with regard to energy policies aimed at implementing renewable sources (**Goal 7 – “Affordable and Clean Energy”** - 91.7) and actions to mitigate the anthropogenic effects on the climate (**Goal 13 – “Climate Action”** - 91.2) which, however, must be further supported by Governments.

The Report underlines that the Mediterranean region, which has high environmental, social and cultural diversity, must face complex challenges in the search for solutions for sustainable development: **Goal 17 (“Partnerships”** - 67.3) in fact shows still wide margins of improvement and requires an even greater commitment to interdisciplinary interactions and transnational collaborations.

List of Mediterranean Countries: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Arab Rep., France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malt, Morocco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey.

### **Additional information**

- *Sustainable Development Report 2019 – Mediterranean Countries Edition*. Sustainable Development Solutions Network Mediterranean (SDSN Med): <http://www.sdsn-mediterranean.unisi.it/2019/10/15/sustainable-development-report-2019-mediterranean-countries-edition/>
- *Sustainable Development Report 2019 -Transformations to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), Bertelsmann Stiftung: <https://www.sdgindex.org/>
- Global Index Score 2019: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/#/>