

## **Main Messages**

Sustainable development is an important priority for the Government of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is committed to doing its part for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals both nationally and internationally.

Bulgaria is a staunch supporter of multilateralism and a rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its center. We took active part in the negotiation process that resulted in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and supported a review mechanism that would allow for a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the SDGs. Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) offer such analysis.

Bulgaria's first VNR has presented a valuable opportunity to take stock of the progress made, to identify challenges and to map out future steps for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It covers all 17 Goals.

Advancement of the 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved by governments alone. It requires the commitment and active participation of all sectors of society. During the drafting process multiple stakeholders were involved: youth, NGOs, the private sector, academia, the local level, vulnerable groups. The VNR outlines some of the initiatives they have undertaken in Bulgaria towards the achievement of the SDGs. Wider public feedback was sought through an online consultation process via the government public consultation portal.

Bulgaria attributes equal importance to the three dimensions of sustainable development. Our policies are guided by the respect for human rights, gender equality and the principle of leaving no one behind. This principle is at the heart of the most important strategic documents aimed at the inclusion of persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups, Roma, young people, the elderly, disadvantaged children, etc.

Bulgaria holds a leading position in Europe in the number of women working in the IT sector – 27%. 53% of the scientists and engineers in our country are women. We are working towards reducing the gender pay gap, promoting equality in decision-making processes, combating gender-based violence.

Bulgaria is a strong advocate for the rights of the child and promotes their integration in all aspects of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Bulgaria is among the few countries that has a UN Youth Delegate program since 2007, as part of the country's effort to empower youth to meet global challenges.

Sound public finances and the conducive macroeconomic environment have ensured consistent economic growth in the last years: 3.8% of GDP per capita in 2018.

Bulgaria has already achieved a 20.53% share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption and plans to raise that share to 27% by 2030.

Bulgaria recognizes the crucial importance of data to measure progress in sustainable development. As an EU Member State, Bulgaria strives to meet EU targets for the SDGs. Last December, the National Statistical Institute launched Monitorstat – a web-based platform for tracking SDG progress. It contains all indicators of the Eurostat SDG framework and multiple indicators from the global SDG framework.

However, key challenges to SDG implementation persist. Reversing the negative demographic trend is among the main objectives. Poverty and inequality, including between regions, pose an obstacle to SDG implementation. Underperformance in reading, mathematics and science mean that more effort is needed to provide quality education for all.

We have ambitious plans for the future. The Council of Ministers will adopt by the end of 2020 the National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030, which will address three main strategic goals: accelerated economic development, demographic upswing and reduction of inequalities. The Programme will outline 13 national priorities in five development areas: Innovative and Intelligent Bulgaria, Green and Sustainable Bulgaria, Connected and Integrated Bulgaria, Responsive and Just Bulgaria, Spirited and Vital Bulgaria. All 13 national priorities are explicitly linked to certain SDGs and will have indicator frameworks specifically developed for them. The Programme reflects the whole-of-government approach to sustainable development and takes into account the interlinkages between SDGs.

One of the most important tasks ahead is the creation of a national mechanism for coordination and implementation of the SDGs. Such mechanism should be located within the executive power. Among its main objectives will be monitoring SDG implementation, ensuring coordinated dialogue and designing sustainable development policies. Raising awareness about the 2030 Agenda and communicating with stakeholders will also be among the main goals of the government.