



Sustainable Development Goals and Migration

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POLICY PAPER



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND MIGRATION

1. Introduction

This overview is based on the findings of the report **“Migration as a basic element of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda challenges”**, which focuses on the relation between sustainable development and immigration, and presents the steps Greece has taken in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the UN 2030 Agenda framework.

Since 2015, when SDGs were adopted with the motto **“no one should be left behind”**, the 17 goals have covered the whole spectrum of challenges that modern societies have to address, thus comprising a common target, but also the means participating countries will employ in order to achieve optimum results until 2030. Being one of them, Greece carried out a mapping process in 2017 to discover the true starting point for the country with a view to 2030. During this process, 8 national priorities¹ were set and they were extensively analyzed² in the voluntary national review for 2018, the only one submitted by Greece so far. In short, the mitigation of poverty and inequalities that obstruct the procedure for a competitive, innovative and sustainable economic growth combined with strong and transparent institutions were set as basic action priorities for the next years.

2. Migration as an element for sustainable development and its function in the Greek society

The facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (Target 10.7) must be a common goal for the international community by 2030. Greece has always been a reception country because of its geographical position, but despite the fact that it has hosted a large number of migrants from the Balkan countries since the early '90s, it has never invested in the formation and adoption of concrete integration policies in the Greek society. Even the Greek reception system has been particularly weak leading the European Court for Human Rights to condemn Greece - long before 2015 - and abiding by the condemnations is still an open issue.

The increased number of arrivals in 2015 and the needs that have emerged since then have brought to the foreground the inefficiencies of the Greek reception system, which should simultaneously be set up almost from scratch in accordance to the European and international standards to address the true pressures it received during its formulation. The integration in the Greek society, which was the next urgent stage after reception for those who received the refugee status, remained weak. The Greek national strategy for integration is rather a synthesis of projects many of which are applied repeatedly or are even pilot ones without evolving into a plan with a strategic direction that will take into consideration the particular characteristics of the Greek society and the needs of the populations

1 [Presentation by the Deputy Minister for the Environment and Energy, Mr. Sokratis Famelos, at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.](#)

2 [Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(July 2018\), General Secretariat of the Government Office of Coordination, Institutional, International & European Affairs.](#)

it should integrate. In brief, following the basic characteristics of the equivalent European management policies for immigration, the Greek policy on immigration follows the standards of prevention and protection of the country's and the European Union's external boundaries instead of protecting human rights.

3. An approach to migration through the SDG spectrum: integration as a prerequisite and the goal for effective economic growth

SDGs bring out in a clear way that intersectionality is imperative for their implementation in order to cover the needs of the whole population and manage to realize equal participation for all the members of the society. As far as the Greek society is concerned, the financial crisis and the austerity measures weakened the continuity of the social fabric and the potential for equal participation, as poverty was intensified and along with it there emerged issues like racism and xenophobia, stereotypes regarding the role of the sexes and, generally, discriminations against population groups, for instance, refugee/immigrant groups, the disabled etc. Fragmentary interventions undertaken within the framework of financial policies are unable to incur deeper incisions which are considered necessary for an inclusive Greek society that will be based on the peaceful coexistence of the groups it is made up of, having, at the same time, the potential to be competitive and sustainable. As far as migration is concerned, the absence of inclusion policies and the positive results they could have is more than obvious during the last decade.

4. Basic conclusions

The Association for Businesses and Industries³ in a newsletter for the Greek economy has recently brought forward the fact that Greece delayed to realize the SDGs, underlining the fact that in certain indicators set by OECD, Greece **scores low** on the issue of gender equality and education, while in sectors like poverty and health is was slightly below the average of the rest of the OECD countries. The fact that the job market shrank and the social structures disintegrated along with the provisions for the whole Greek population had an impact on all social groups. The pandemic further intercepted progress towards the implementation of the SDGs, while the prospect of integration for the refugee and immigrant populations does not look promising.

5. Policy proposals

Based on the above conclusions, it is important to:

- Monitor the procedure the Greek government follows in order to develop a national strategy for the SDGs, where certain actions to achieve each goal will be presented.
- Ensure that the civil society, the academia and the private sector are represented in the consultation procedures about the SDGs.

³ [SEV, Newsletter for the Greek economy: "Sustainable development for a strong economy!" October, 2019, page 1-2.](#)

- Frequently write and publish the National Voluntary Reviews on the course of the SDGs implementation so that there is potential to follow the actions taking place to achieve the SDGs and the contribution in the international debate and exchange of good practices.
- Adopt integration policies that will focus on equal access for migrants and refugees in health, education and the job market.
- Adopt early integration policies with measures which will ensure that the refugee, asylum seekers and migrant populations will not be deprived of their social rights until the legal procedures they follow will be fulfilled.
- Incorporate a human rights based approach when planning the migration policies of the country, putting emphasis on the protection of the mobile populations so that the procedures they have to follow are carried out uneventfully.
- Develop a national action plan/strategy to combat racism and all forms of racial violence.
- Provide educational opportunities to enhance skills and obtain knowledge that will facilitate access to the job market for all.
- Enhance the employment projects to ensure direct access to the job market.
- Increase employment and financial independence for women and address the phenomenon of female poverty.
- Support motherhood and childcare, but also single-parent families within the measures taken to reconcile the professional with family life (collaboration with the authorities and employers through adopting family friendly practices at work places, like alternate timetables, avoid overtime etc.), improve legislation on maternity leave and the upbringing issue, and, generally, protect motherhood).
- Develop motives to encourage men to use parental leave.
- Increase the number of posts at nurseries and kindergartens.
- Campaign for equal distribution of household responsibilities and eradicate stereotypes about the role of men and women in the house and the family.

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