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NEWSLETTER •
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INTRO

Dear readers,

Welcome to the 8th edition of the "SDGs for All" Platform newsletter.

More than half of the planned period for the implementation of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda has passed, and it seems that the global community is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The financial and energy crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the war in Ukraine and significant geopolitical upheavals, pose a serious obstacle to achieve the envisioned world in 2030.



Milorad Bjeletic

This development has brought energy, energy security, and climate change to the forefront of the political agendas of almost all countries worldwide, directly impacting the fulfillment of SDG 13, which is Climate Action. According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, **it will be extremely challenging to achieve the objective of limiting the global temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.**

"It is estimated that the consequences of climate change negatively affect approximately 3.6 billion people on the planet"

This limit is essential to avoid the destructive consequences of the climate crisis. While global emissions reduction policies have demonstrated some success in curbing emissions, more ambitious targets and measures are necessary to reach the established objective. Otherwise, the current situation regarding the consequences of global warming could worsen, accompanied by an increase in natural disasters due to rising global temperatures. Droughts and floods will become more frequent and contribute to increased hunger worldwide. It is estimated that the consequences of climate change negatively affect approximately 3.6 billion people on the planet.

As for Serbia, it is a part of a region that is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This indicates that Serbia will experience an increase in already noticeable summer heatwaves and droughts, while changes in rainfall distribution and intensity will lead to more frequent floods. ***This situation highlights the need for a responsible and more ambitious climate policy in Serbia.*** However, according to the Europe Sustainable Development Report, the only SDG where Serbia is regressing and lags behind with the achievements is SDG 13. Key legal and strategic documents regulating this area have been missing for years. Nevertheless, significant steps have been taken over the last two years. A more ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution was submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022, committing Serbia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33.3% by 2030 compared to 1990. In 2023, Serbia adopted the Low Carbon Development Strategy and the Climate Adaptation Program. During the same period, the work began on the development of two key documents in this field: the Environmental Protection Strategy and the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP).

In the field of climate and energy policy, the European integration process is of paramount importance, as ***Serbia must align its climate ambitions with the defined targets of the European Union.*** The obligations of the Republic of Serbia related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda align with the commitments arising from accession negotiations with the European Union. This fact is clearly emphasized in the European Commission Communication COM/2016/0739, in which the European Commission confirmed its intention to integrate Sustainable Development Goals into its strategic documents.

"2030 Agenda contains Sustainable Development Goals that should serve as the basis for shaping all public policies, both globally and in Serbia"

Additionally, this communication is accompanied by a document titled ***"Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future"*** in which the 2030 Agenda is highlighted as a key component in shaping the future legislative framework of the European Union. Agenda itself contains Sustainable Development Goals that should serve as the basis for shaping all public policies, both globally and in Serbia.

In 2020, at the summit in Sofia organized within the framework of the Berlin Process for the Western Balkans, the countries of the region, including Serbia, signed the ***Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.*** By signing this document, the countries in the region committed to the implementation of the Green Agenda as a kind of "roadmap" for a series of concrete actions and measures to align their national climate goals with those of the European Union.



The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans represents a regional contribution to the realization of the European Green Deal, a political document of the European Union that marks a turning point in the fight against climate change and outlines a comprehensive development strategy for the EU, with the aim of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

Alongside the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, an Action Plan has been adopted that establishes the framework for coordinating and supporting the proper implementation and systematic monitoring of progress from 2021 to 2030. Given that the Action Plan covers the period until 2030, it states that alignment with the objectives of the most significant international and European policies, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals established in 2030 Agenda, is possible.

In the previous period, Serbia took steps in the development and adoption of certain documents to incorporate the goals of the Green Agenda into its public policies. Since the beginning of the year, the process of developing the ***Environmental Protection Strategy*** has begun, which will set the directions for the development and activities of our country in this field.

The goals of the Strategy will be aligned with the objectives of the Sofia Declaration and the pillars of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: decarbonization, energy efficiency, and reduction of industrial emissions; circular economy for efficient resource use and industrial symbiosis; reduction of environmental pollution with a focus on air quality; protection and investment in biodiversity and ecosystems; and sustainable food systems and rural development. This process is still in the stage of drafting the initial version of the document, which can be expected in the coming months.

In addition to setting the direction for the development and activities of our country through the Strategy, the process of developing another significant strategic document, the ***Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP)***, has continued. The adoption of this instrument of energy and climate policy is an international obligation for us within the Energy Community, a document that should chart the path to a just transition to carbon neutrality for each individual member state of the European Union, as well as for the states in the process of European integration.

Unlike the Environmental Protection Strategy, which is still in the draft stage, a public consultation on the INECP was held this summer from June 12th to July 28th, allowing experts and interested public to provide comments and participate in the development of this document.

"The impression is that Serbia is not showing sufficient commitment to combat climate change and its consequences. This is most evident in the recent budget rebalance"

In addition to adopting strategic documents, financial resources allocated for the implementation of promised achievements are of utmost importance. In this regard, the impression is that Serbia is not showing sufficient commitment to combat climate change and its consequences. This is most evident in the recent budget rebalance on September 6th, 2023. Allocations for the Ministry of Environmental Protection have been reduced by over 4 billion dinars.

This includes ***a reduction in funds allocated for the implementation of the IPA 2020 project - Environment and Climate Action - from 922 million RSD to just 82 million RSD***. It is needless to remind that significantly larger investments are required for any progress in adapting to climate change.

Serbia is currently at a crossroads, and it is of great importance that the direction of our development aligns with the goals set in international and European documents that will eventually bind us as a candidate for European Union membership. This will contribute to achieving stable and sustainable development, including the preservation of nature and a better quality of life for future generations.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the general public is informed about the drafting processes and, after their expected adoption in the coming months, monitors the implementation of the Environmental Protection Strategy and the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan.

Milorad Bjeletic
Belgrade Open School

ENHANCING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING THROUGH INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

On July 11 the conference “Enhancing Local Economic Development Planning through Inter-Municipal Cooperation” took place in Niš, organized by the Center for Advanced Economic Studies (CEVES) in collaboration with the Regional Development Agency South. It was the first out of six events that will be organized by the “SDGs for All” Platform with aim to initiate the exchange of experiences and knowledge among municipalities and cities throughout Serbia about the localization of SDGs and their integration into local planning documents.

The event gathered representatives from the local self-governments of Nišava, Pirot, Zaječar, Toplica and Jablanica districts, as well as central-level institutions, development projects, civil society organizations, and agencies.



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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN – FOUNDATION FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY



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“Economic empowerment of women is the foundation for achieving gender equality, as well as sustainable development and the realization of the goals set by the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda,” stated Ivona Gvozdenovic, representative of the Social Pillar of the “SDGs for All” Platform and project manager at the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation, at the conference “Women Entrepreneurship – framework and opportunities for empowerment”, organized within the framework of the German-Serbian Initiative for Sustainable Growth and Employment and UN Women, with the support of the EU project “Key Steps towards Gender Equality” on June 5 in Belgrade, aiming to initiate a dialogue on women’s entrepreneurship, exchange experiences, improve conditions, and create opportunities for women’s empowerment.

CEVES JOINS THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR NATIONAL SDG ADVISORY BODIES ON BEHALF OF THE “SDGs FOR ALL” PLATFORM

Global Forum for



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The “SDGs for All” Platform will leverage its membership in the Global Forum, as well as the knowledge gained within it, to continue advocating for policy coherence and effective implementation of the SDGs at the national level. By joining the Global Forum, the “SDGs for All” Platform reaffirms its commitment to sustainable development and fostering collaboration, thus strengthening its position as a key player in driving sustainable development efforts in Serbia. We expect that these partnerships will accelerate efforts in building a better future for all, leaving no one behind.

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SUSTAINABILITY TALKS: THE PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Sustainability is, more than ever, at the center of corporate activities, and ESG is a powerful tool that supports the business sector in its efforts to contribute to sustainable development. In this process, the civil society is playing a catalyzing role by supporting exchange and dialogue, while the public sector makes sustainability happen through compiled and comprehensive policies and programs.

Following the principle that cooperation is the key to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, the Responsible Business Forum and Smart Kolektiv, within the “SDGs for All” Platform, organized the event “Sustainability Talks: The Pathway to Sustainable Business” designed to bring together stakeholders from the private, public and the civil sector, and provide small and medium-sized enterprises with an opportunity for networking and learning, simultaneously being a source of quality recommendations and advice to those just starting to incorporate sustainability as one of the strategic goals of their businesses. At the first of a series of planned events, which was held on August 3 in Novi Sad and hosted by Elixir Group, participants discussed how ESG, CSR and SDGs work together for sustainability, non-financial reporting as the key to transparency and business sustainability, working together for a better society, and the link between key ESG performance indicators and sustainable development indicators.

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The **Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (INECP)** is a crucial instrument for energy and climate policy and a document that should outline the path to a just transition to carbon neutrality for each EU member state, as well as countries in the process of EU integration, including Serbia. This important strategic document is a way for Serbia to set its direction and define the energy transition process through five pillars: *decarbonization by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the share of renewable energy sources; energy efficiency; energy security; the internal energy market; and research, innovation and competitiveness.*

Although it would be extremely important in theory to explain the contribution of INECP to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this is not evident in the document. Among other comments submitted by the **Belgrade Open School** to the Ministry of Mining and Energy, it is stated that INECP is a document transposed into our legislation based on the Energy Community Treaty, and therefore, the **relevant SDGs and targets of the Agenda must be taken into account when creating this document.**

RACE TO 2030: THE INTEGRATED NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLAN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH IS FEASIBLE ONLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY DECENT WORK



Voices in Serbia” organized by GIZ – German Cooperation in Serbia and the Initiative for Global Solidarity.

"We continuously deal with the protection and promotion of labor rights in the context of respecting international standards, insisting that the rights related to work make an integral part of human rights and must be equally protected. The protection of labor rights is also important in the context of Serbia’s accession negotiations with the European Union and the need to harmonize legislation and institutional practice with the standards that exist in the EU”, said Vuckovic.

"Economic growth must also bring decent work, as these two are connected and must be given equal importance and respect", said Nataša Vuckovic, Secretary General of the Center for Democracy Foundation at the panel discussion “Contribution of CSOs and trade unions to the rights of workers in supply chains” held on September 8 in the framework of the meeting “Effective Grievance Mechanisms – Empowering Workers’

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UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

-  **Inter-Municipal Dialogue organized by Social Pillar (September)**
-  **Inter-Municipal Dialogue organized by Environmental Pillar (October)**
-  **"SDGs For All" Platform Annual Conference (November)**
-  **SME100 Expo 2023: Development of People ↔ Development of SMEs, CEVES (November)**
-  **CSR&ESG Forum, SMART kolektiv/Responsible Business Forum (December)**

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