

Press release

Ireland is performing well in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

From [Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications](#)

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1. [Education](#)
2. [Employment and social protection](#)
3. [Health](#)
4. [Community engagement and inclusion](#)
5. [Housing](#)
6. [Climate action](#)
7. [Circular economy](#)
8. [Quotes](#)
9. [Notes](#)

Ireland is progressing well in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, fully achieving over 80% of the associated 169 targets. Ireland has made significant progress towards targets in a number of areas, such as education, hunger reduction, health and wellbeing.

Following government approval, Ireland has submitted its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the Sustainable Development Goals to the United Nations. The VNR assesses the progress on actions to achieve Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as set out in Ireland's second [National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals \(2022-2024\)](#). ([/en/publication/e950f-national-implementation-plan-for-the-](#)

[sustainable-development-goals-2022-2024/](#)) The National Implementation Plan demonstrates the continued commitment to the 2030 Agenda through a 'whole-of-government' approach and mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals across national policies.

The Voluntary National Review reflects Ireland's strong economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic and our efforts to build back better while leaving no-one behind. It demonstrates how we are accelerating action towards achieving the SDGs, the progress that has been made, and the range of national policies introduced by Government to support this national effort, in particular in the areas of education, employment and social protection, health, community engagement and inclusion, housing, climate action and circular economy. The report also acknowledges that there are areas where Ireland faces further challenges in achieving the SDGs, highlighting the importance of continuing efforts so that public policy can contribute to better lives for people in Ireland and across the globe.

Some achievements to date include the following.

Education

In early childhood care and education, 97% of all children in the eligible age cohort are availing of the [Early Childhood Care and Education \(ECCE\) Programme](#), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/>), which provides two years of State-funded pre-school education.

In higher education, since 2011, over €330 million has been spent on [Springboard+](#) (<https://springboardcourses.ie/>) and over 90,000 people have benefited from the programme to date.

Employment and social protection

The target of 2.5 million people at work, set out in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4939-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan-2021/>), was achieved by the end of 2021, and now stands at 2.574 million. This is an increase of approximately 10% since the pre-pandemic Q1 2020 levels of just over 2.3 million.

Health

The Women's Health Taskforce was established in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare, with engagement and feedback forming the foundations of the Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023. (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/232af-womens-health-action-plan-2022-2023/>). Budget 2023 allocated €69.2 million to women's health, an increase from €31 million in 2022.

Community engagement and inclusion

Our Rural Future, (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4c236-our-rural-future-vision-and-policy-context/>), the government's blueprint for the development of rural Ireland, provides the framework to achieve the vision of transforming the quality of life and opportunity for people living in rural areas, with each of its policy measures currently aligned with one or more of the SDGs.

Since 2014, there is greater representation in the community sector through Public Participation Networks (PPN), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/a58b8-community-groups-public-participation-networks/>), which have been established in each of the 31 local authority areas.

Housing

CSO data from 2022 shows the highest annual total of new homes completed since 2011 (when the data series began), 21% above the 2022 target set out in [Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/>) the government's housing policy to 2030.

Climate action

Targets under all 17 SDGs are being progressed by the [Climate Action Plan 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/), ([/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/)) which provides the framework for Ireland to meet legally-binding carbon budgets, sectoral emissions ceilings and the emissions reductions targets set out in the [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/section/15/enacted/en/html). (<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/section/15/enacted/en/html>).

Ireland has already made good progress in decarbonising the electricity sector over the last decade, with electricity emissions falling by 45% between 2005 and 2020. In 2020, 42% of all electricity generated in Ireland came from renewable sources.

Circular economy

In line with EU policy and legislation, Ireland has already banned a number of single-use disposable items on the Irish market, and also launched a [deposit return scheme in 2022](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/b3f2f-minister-smyth-launches-irelands-deposit-return-scheme/), ([/en/press-release/b3f2f-minister-smyth-launches-irelands-deposit-return-scheme/](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/b3f2f-minister-smyth-launches-irelands-deposit-return-scheme/)) expected to be fully operational by February 2024.

Many actions to achieve the SDGs are embedded in overarching national policies for recovery from the pandemic, including the [Economic Recovery Plan](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/709d1-economic-recovery-plan/), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/709d1-economic-recovery-plan/>) and the [National Recovery and Resilience Plan](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4939-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan-2021/), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4939-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan-2021/>) as well as policies and frameworks such as the [Well-being Framework](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-well-being-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/), (<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-well-being-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/>) Ireland's [Climate Action Plan](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/) ([/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/)) and those on the green and digital transitions, such as the [National Retrofit Plan](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5052a-national-retrofit-plan/) ([/en/publication/5052a-national-retrofit-plan/](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5052a-national-retrofit-plan/)) and [Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/adf42-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/). (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/adf42-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/>).

Ireland is also integrating the SDGs into overseas development policy. [A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development \(2019\)](https://www.irishaid.ie/about-us/policy-for-international-development/) (<https://www.irishaid.ie/about-us/policy-for-international-development/>) sets out our priorities, including reducing humanitarian need, supporting climate action, promoting gender equality, and strengthening governance, while reaching the furthest behind first.

Quotes

Minister Ryan said:

"I welcome the opportunity that the Voluntary National Review has provided us with to take stock of Ireland's progress to date, and to focus on the efforts that we will continue to make.

"We are more determined than ever to accelerate action to achieve Agenda 2030 and to lead on the SDGs both at home and abroad, and we recognise that everyone has a role to play. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of those who provided input to this review, including civil society, young people, stakeholder groups and government departments.

"Through this VNR we are reaffirming our commitment to the SDGs, recognising that they offer us a pathway and opportunity to create a better, greener, and safer world, and a just transition that transforms every sector of our society, while leaving no one behind."

Ireland's Voluntary National Review 2023, which will be presented to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>) in July 2023, is available to view on the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications website.

(</en/publication/274d0-sustainable-development-goals-voluntary-national-review-2023/>).

Read more about Ireland's second National Implementation Plan (2022-2024) on the department's website. (</en/publication/e950f-national-implementation-plan-for-the-sustainable-development-goals-2022-2024/>).

Notes

Voluntary National Review (VNR)

A Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a reporting mechanism through which countries assess and present national progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including the pledge to 'Leave No One Behind'. It is a voluntary, country-led review, which aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the

implementation of Agenda 2030. A VNR also seeks to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A country reports into the UN membership when they present their VNR.

Ireland submitted its first VNR (</en/publication/97fc1-ireland-voluntary-national-review-2018/>) in 2018.

Building Back Better while Leaving No One Behind

Ireland's 2023 VNR was developed under the theme of 'Building Back Better while Leaving No One Behind', guided by the central commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the theme of the 2023 High Level Political Forum (HLPF). (<https://www.unep.org/high-level-political-forum-2023>) In this context, civil society and stakeholders were invited, along with government departments, to contribute to the VNR through a public consultation, stakeholder fora and a special youth consultation process. This has resulted in input from civil society and stakeholders, as well as a dedicated youth chapter — the first time a country has provided a standalone youth chapter in its VNR.

Agenda 2030

In September 2015, all 193 UN Member States, including Ireland, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to 'end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all' as part of the new agenda — Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>) This framework is made up of 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Ireland had a significant role in its development and adoption, as co-facilitator, together with Kenya, of the intergovernmental negotiations in September 2015.

United Nations High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Agenda 2030 recognises the importance of follow-up and review at the national, regional, and global level to measure implementation progress of the SDGs. The UN High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the main United Nations platform for sustainable development and Agenda 2030, and has the central role in overseeing follow-up and review at global level.

The 2023 HLPF will be held from 10-19 July 2023 at the UN Headquarters in New York, with the central theme “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”. Find out more on the [United Nations website. \(https://hlpf.un.org/\)](https://hlpf.un.org/).

2023 SDG Summit

The 2023 SDG Summit will take place in September 2023 during the United Nations General Assembly high-level week, marking the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Heads of State and Government will carry out a comprehensive review of the state of the SDGs, respond to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises facing the world, and provide high-level political guidance on transformative and accelerated actions leading up to the target year of 2030 for achieving the SDGs. The outcome of the summit will be a negotiated political declaration which Ireland and Qatar are co-facilitating. Find out more on the [United Nations website. \(https://hlpf.un.org/sdg-summit\)](https://hlpf.un.org/sdg-summit).

Part of

Policies

[Climate Action and Environment \(/en/policy/d7a12b-climate-action-and-environment/\)](/en/policy/d7a12b-climate-action-and-environment/).

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