



Roundtable of Hungarian Civil Society Organisations for the Sustainable Development Goals:

Recommendations for the national implementation

To implement the Sustainable Development Goals, the concept and the values of sustainable development should be integrated in the everyday and long-term decisions of the actors of the governmental, economic, educational, scientific sector and all citizens. This requires the change of our behaviour; we have to create a new system of ethics and values and rebuild the trust among the various actors of society. **Therefore, the issue of sustainability cannot be managed as only a political or governmental matter, but the various communities, civil society organisations must also play an important role.**

When it was adopted, none of the international programmes had as a strong commitment and broad political support as the Agenda 2030. Despite the extensive preparatory work and ambition, the implementation cannot be regarded as one being carried out as planned. While in Hungary there is not yet the required institutional setup and action plan in place, which would serve the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, in 2017 the UN admitted¹ that there is no chance to reach the goals globally at the pace followed till then.

Experiencing the shortfall both internationally and nationally, several sectors have taken independent initiatives. The organisations of the economic, academic and civil sectors have begun to organise themselves, and have created various platforms to assist the process of implementation. As one of these platforms, the **Roundtable of Hungarian Civil Society Organisations for the Sustainable Development Goals** was established by 11 national organisations in October, 2017 with the following objectives²:

- promoting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and raising public awareness in the society and in the public discourse;
- monitoring the implementation of the goals in Hungary, and making recommendations to the government and various actors of society;
- promoting a structured dialogue between the governmental and non-governmental organisations;
- exchanging information between the members and getting to know each other's efforts and work related to the SDGs.

¹<https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/07/561632-un-report-urges-accelerated-efforts-achieve-sustainable-development-goals#.WYoDuogrJaQ>

² **The founding organisations of the Roundtable:** CEEweb for Biodiversity, Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (DemNet), Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid (HAND), KÖVET Association for Sustainable Economies, Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network, National Society of Conservationists, Hungarian Climate Alliance, Batthyány Society of Professors, Protect the Future, WWF Hungary



Since its establishment, the Roundtable has created the website <http://ffcelok.hu>, which is the first Hungarian site dedicated to the Agenda 2030 and its implementation. Among others the website provides information on the actual state of national implementation, inter alia, by means of 80 indicators on where Hungary stands in implementation, and on the commitments of more than 75 civil society organisations contributing to the implementation with their activities.

The members of the Roundtable have started to collect good examples and prepare recommendations in their fields of expertise. Our aim is to support the implementation and set an example for other sectors too; to start a dialogue within the civil sector and with other stakeholders on how the goals can be reached in a systemic approach, when the solutions strengthen not weaken each other.

Imperativeness of national implementation

Civil society organisations also took part in the elaboration and adoption of the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development, which identified 16 key indicators for the evaluation of the state of our national resources (e.g. public debt, productivity ratio, biologically inactive territories). These indicators mainly rely on the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. According to the most recent progress report of the strategy, half of the key indicators have negative trend, 5 have positive trend and stagnation was observed for the remaining ones. Compared to the EU average, 8 out of 16 key indicators are below average. None of the indicators is above average, and there are only two, which are at the EU's average value and demonstrate positive trend at the same time. This also clearly indicates that **we need to take much stronger steps to identify and implement the national actions arising from the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals approved also by Hungary.**

The integrated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The international program combines the goals and tools of the hitherto separate and mainly inconsistent development cooperation and sustainable development agenda, and use the more holistic concept of sustainable development. The problem is that **it tries to solve the problems separately**, although the solutions should be identified in a **system**, in the context of environment and development. In addition, it is essential to attempt **to change the driving forces** which create the problems.

Another deficiency is that it does not take into account the **conflicts between the specific goals**, such as the contradictions between the goals related to energy, economic growth and the conservation of natural resources. Since mankind has already exceeded the carrying capacity of our planet, the objective of all subprograms should include the reduction of resource use and the **careful and sustainable use of natural resources.**



To eliminate the above problems we need such holistic, systematic solutions that have an impact at the level of the driving forces, and thus they contribute to the implementation of more goals:

- The basis of **poverty** eradication is that everybody should have equal access to the conditions of income generation such as natural resources, knowledge, information, market and affordable loans.
- Sustainable society requires **people that understand systems-based approach**, who are able to identify the interrelations and act accordingly; that is why an education reform is necessary. We must pay much more attention to education aiming at raising awareness of global issues and their interconnectedness. We must strengthen the role of **ethics** and consciousness related to sustainability in politics, society and economy.
- There is a need to shift towards **community possession of natural resources** including land and the forest. We can only create sustainable production and consumption systems if **the total consumption of material, energy and land continuously decreases**. We must support the establishment of **local community economies** and interest-free substitutes for money, which help keep the benefits on local level.
- It is essential to create **policy coherence** and harmonise the sectoral plans with the sustainable development framework.
- Activities supported by public funds must not cause harm in the social and environmental systems. The **harmful subsidies** should be eliminated, including the support of fossil fuel use. The sources provided to the support of agriculture must be shifted to activities fulfilling ecological conditions and supporting labour. The respect of environmental considerations, equality and anti-discrimination should be ensured in the development policy. We must increase the transparency and the community control of the spending of public funds.
- It is necessary to create a set of coherent objectives within the Hungarian framework of **international development cooperation** along with a more efficient institutional system (e.g. establishing an implementing agency); a complex monitoring and evaluation system (not limited only to the projects of the Ministry responsible for foreign affairs); a strengthened social dialogue; as well as the systematic increase of resources. The development aid must not serve economic interests and enable the transfer of the developed world's unsustainable patterns. Aid must strengthen the identity of local communities, the self-government of their societies, the protection of their natural resources and their economic autonomy.
- During the implementation of the goals, there is a need to rely on resources available both in the business sector and the civil society. We must support the **self-organising groups of the civil society and churches**, which increase social trust relying on the cooperation of individuals and families.



The importance of the institutional system

The ability of the **governmental institutions must be examined** regarding the implementation of the tasks resulting from the Agenda 2030. It is necessary to harmonise the sectoral strategies with the sustainable development framework.

It is essential to carry out the strategic coordination of implementation of the SDGs at the government level that could be realised most effectively at secretary of state level, also in accordance with National Sustainable Development Strategy adopted in 2013 by the Parliament.

We need a more effective, open and proactive **social cooperation** than before. Besides entrusting the **National Council for Sustainable Development** with an appropriate professional conciliatory and advisory role, there is a need for a more active cooperation with the various stakeholders of the society.

The institutional system responsible for the implementation of the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development and the Hungarian participation in the international development cooperation is currently isolated. **A stronger relationship** is needed within the framework of some coordinative mechanism **between those national institutions which deal with sustainable development and international development cooperation.**

The basic features of the public participation

For the successful implementation of the SDGs, a relevant national institutional system providing broad public participation ought to be established.

The relevant stakeholders must be involved in the partnership, for instance the business sector, the municipalities and the civil society organisations. It is also important that the national plans and such reports are considered by the National Assembly.

We recommend the following as the elements of the institutional system of public participation:

1) Access to information

The relevant international and national documents in connection with the implementation of the goals as well as their comprehensible summaries must be made available on a public website.

2) Wide public communication

It is important that the government continuously inform the Hungarian society about the implementation process of the Sustainable Development Goals by using different tools.



3) Active involvement of the partners

The different stakeholders must actively be involved in the implementation, monitoring and reporting. The drafts of the documents must be sent to the organisations concerned in an early phase, the incoming opinions must be considered, and a response must be sent to the participants. It is also necessary to organise events which enable personal participation.

4) The continuous, direct participation of the stakeholders

Sectoral and whole-of-government working groups should be formed, which deal with the planning, monitoring, reporting of the implementation. The representative bodies of the stakeholders must be involved in these working groups as permanent members.

The situation and role of civil society organisations in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The public participation in the SDG implementation and progress reporting process should be upscaled, assisted, institutionally and financially supported in line with SDG 17.

The goals were planned so that science, economy, government, and civil society could work together to provide a good basis for the common actions. The members of the Roundtable of Hungarian Civil Society Organisations for the Sustainable Development Goals and other organisations contribute to the achievement of the goals through their various programs while also cooperating with other sectors. We present some examples in the following document: Good practices for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: http://ffcelok.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sdg_good_practices.pdf