

*Data extracted in April 2024.  
Planned article update: June 2025.*

## Highlights

### The UN Sustainable Development Goals

This article is a part of a [set of statistical articles](#), which are based on the Eurostat publication '[Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context — 2024 edition](#)'. This report is the eighth edition of Eurostat's series of monitoring reports on sustainable development, which provide a quantitative assessment of progress of the EU towards the SDGs in an EU context.

## About this publication

[Sustainable development](#) objectives have been at the heart of European policy-making for a long time. They are firmly anchored in the European Treaties<sup>1</sup> and are a mainstream part of key projects, sectorial policies and initiatives. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015, have given a new impetus to global efforts towards achieving sustainable development. The EU and its Member States are committed to this historic global framework agreement and to playing an active role in maximising progress towards the SDGs.

The von der Leyen Commission has made sustainability an overriding political priority for its mandate. All SDGs feature in one or more of the six headline ambitions for Europe announced in the [Political Guidelines](#), making all Commission work streams, policies and strategies conducive to achieving the SDGs. Key elements of the Commission's 'whole of government' approach for delivering on the 2030 Agenda include the design of deeply transformative policies such as the '[European Green Deal](#)' and the integration of the SDGs into the [European Semester](#). The European Green Deal aims to transform the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where climate and environmental challenges are addressed and turned into opportunities, while making the transition just and inclusive for all. The Commission's overall approach towards implementing the SDGs is described in the staff working document (SWD) '[Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals — A comprehensive approach](#)'.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Articles 3 \(5\) and 21 \(2\) of the Treaty on European Union \(TEU\)](#).



Eurostat supports this approach through regular monitoring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context. This publication is the eighth edition of Eurostat's series of monitoring reports, which provide a quantitative assessment of the EU's progress towards reaching the SDGs. This publication is based on the [EU SDG indicator set](#), which includes indicators relevant to the EU and enables the monitoring of progress towards the goals in the context of long-term EU policies. It is aligned as far as appropriate with the UN list of global indicators, but it is not completely identical. This allows the EU SDG indicators to focus on monitoring EU policies and on phenomena particularly relevant in a European context.

The Eurostat monitoring report is a key tool for facilitating the coordination of SDG-related policies at both EU and Member States levels. As part of this process, it promotes the ongoing assessment and monitoring of progress in implementing the SDGs, and helps to highlight their cross-cutting nature and the links between them.

This 2024 edition of the EU SDG monitoring report begins with a synopsis of the EU's overall progress towards the SDGs, followed by a presentation of the policy background at the global and EU levels and the way the SDGs are monitored at EU level. The detailed monitoring results are presented in 17 articles, one for each of the 17 SDGs. This is preceded by an analysis of how the recent most impactful circumstances, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis, have influenced the EU on its way towards achieving the SDGs. The report closes by comparing the EU with other main economies against selected SDG indicators and providing an analysis of the spillover effects of EU consumption on other parts of the world. The Annexes contain a list of the policy targets monitored in this report as well as notes on methods and sources.

## The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

'Development which meets the needs of the current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This is the definition of sustainable development that was first introduced in the [Brundtland report](#) by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, and it is the one most widely used nowadays. After the Brundtland report came several important milestones in the international pursuit of sustainable development: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Declaration (from which the Millennium Development Goals were derived), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), the 2005 World Summit and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012. Together, they paved the way for the [2030 Agenda](#).

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the '[Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)' document. The 2030 Agenda is the current global sustainable development agenda. At the core of the 2030 Agenda is a list of 17 SDGs (see Figure 1) and 169 related targets to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity and peace. The Agenda also calls for a revitalised global partnership to ensure its implementation. The SDGs are unprecedented in terms of significance and scope by setting a wide range of economic, social and environmental objectives and calling for action by all countries, regardless of their level of economic development. The Agenda emphasises that strategies for ending poverty and promoting sustainable development for all must go hand in hand with actions that address a wider range of social needs and which foster

peaceful, just and inclusive societies, protect the environment and help tackle climate change. Although the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for achieving the 17 goals. Monitoring of the SDGs takes place at various levels: global, regional, national, local and thematic. The UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the UN's central platform to follow up and review the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the global level. To this end, the 2030 Agenda encourages UN member states to conduct voluntary national reviews of progress towards the SDGs<sup>2</sup>. Regular reviews by the HLPF are voluntary, state-led, and undertaken by both developed and developing countries. In July 2023, the European Commission presented the [first EU voluntary review](#), reflecting on the collective effort of the EU and its Member States regarding SDGs implementation. This was the first time when a voluntary review was presented not by a country but by a supranational union, such as the EU.

In order to follow up and review the goals and targets, a set of global indicators was designed by an Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG-SDGs) under the supervision of the UN Statistical Commission<sup>3</sup>. In July 2017, the UNGA adopted a [global SDG indicator list](#), including 232 indicators. A comprehensive review of the indicator framework in early 2020 resulted in the approval of 36 major changes to the global SDG indicator list including additions and deletions. Therefore, the revised [global SDG indicator framework](#) from 2020 now consists of 231 indicators. Another such review is planned for 2025.

### Figure 1: The UN Sustainable Development Goals

Every year, the UN releases a Report of the Secretary-General on '[Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#)', followed by an [SDG report](#) for the broader public. The latter provides an overview of progress on each of the 17 SDGs based on selected indicators from the global indicator framework. The 2023 UN annual report was a [special edition](#) that provided a mid-term review of progress made globally since 2015 and put forward major recommendations to rescue the goals that are not on track.

The global indicator framework used to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is complemented by indicators at the level of UN world regions and at national level. For example, indicator sets have been developed for the [Asia-Pacific region](#), for [Africa](#) and for [Latin America and the Caribbean](#). At the European level, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) selected 80 indicators from the global list based on relevance for the region and data availability for a newly developed [UNECE SDG Dashboard](#). The UNECE also published a [first edition of a Roadmap on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals](#) in July 2017 and a [second edition](#) in February 2022. The latest roadmap aims to provide guidance to members of national statistical systems and other stakeholders on how to best navigate the complex task of measuring the achievement of the 2030 Agenda's goals and targets. The roadmap covers different aspects such as national coordination, reporting on global SDG indicators, tracking progress at various levels, quality assurance, the ambition to 'leave no one behind' communication, Voluntary National Reviews and capacity development. The EU SDG indicator set is in line with the UNECE roadmaps.

## Sustainable development in the European Union

Sustainable development is not only a core principle for the European Union but also an overriding political priority for the von der Leyen Commission, which is reflected in the six headline ambitions for Europe announced in the [Political Guidelines](#) (see Figure 2) and the investment priority areas of the [Global Gateway strategy](#). Each Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that the policies under his or her oversight embed the Sustainable

<sup>2</sup>Conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven' (paragraph 79) of '[Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)'. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has established an online platform to compile inputs from countries participating in the national voluntary reviews of the annual session of the HLPF. See: <https://hlpf.un.org>

<sup>3</sup>The United Nations Statistical Commission, established in 1947, is the highest body of the global statistical system. It brings together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world. It is the highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international level.

Development Goals, while the college of Commissioners is jointly responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The President set out a 'whole-of-government approach' towards implementing the 2030 Agenda (see Figure 3). In June 2023, the [Council of the European Union reaffirmed](#) that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs remained the collective roadmap of the EU and its Member States for a sustainable future.



**Figure 2: The European Commission Priorities**

Several major policy documents have shaped the EU's approach to implementing the SDGs. A communication from 2016 '[Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability](#)' announced the integration of the SDGs into the European policy framework. As a consequence, the EU has been monitoring the implementation of the SDGs since 2017 via annual SDG monitoring reports. In addition, a reflection paper '[Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030](#)' from 2019 highlighted the complex challenges the EU is facing and identified the competitive advantages that implementing the SDGs would offer the EU. Since late 2019, the von der Leyen Commission has presented many transformative policies aimed at delivering on the many aspects of sustainability in the EU and beyond. The EU's approach for implementing the 2030 Agenda is briefly summarised below and described in detail in a staff working document (SWD) '[Delivering on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals — A comprehensive approach](#)'. For a complete overview of the European Commission's activities related to SDG implementation, see the [Commission's website on the EU's holistic approach to sustainable development](#).



**Figure 3: The Commission’s ‘Whole-of-Government approach’ to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals**

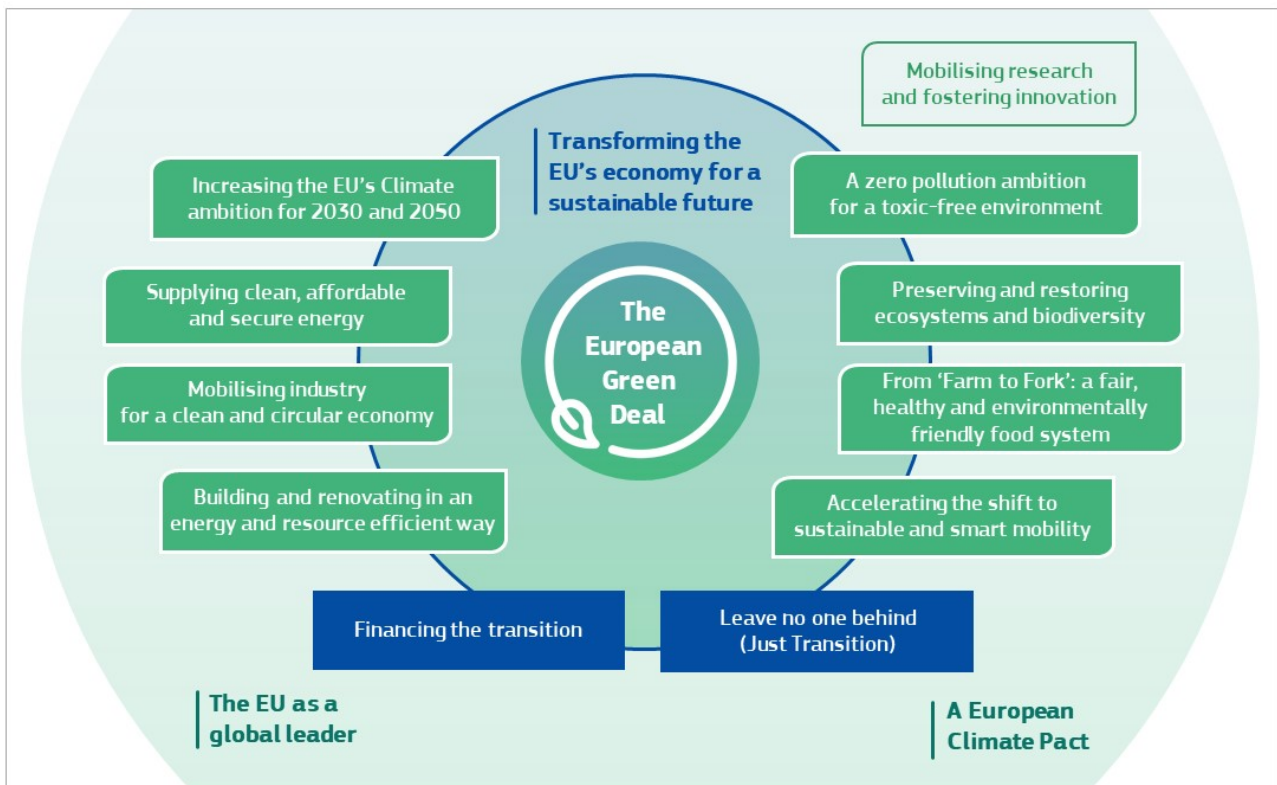
The [European Green Deal](#) , adopted in December 2019, is the EU's growth strategy and aims to transform the Union into a climate-neutral society while leaving no one behind (see Figure 4). It aims to create a modern, resource-efficient, competitive and fair economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use. It also aims to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital and to protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. It is also an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

In March 2020, a new [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) was adopted by the European Commission, introducing measures along the entire life cycle of products. The new Plan focuses on design and production for a circular economy, with the aim of ensuring that the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible.

The [EU Bioeconomy Strategy](#) provides a cross-cutting framework to enable transformative innovations regarding the use of biological resources, and to ensure that the supply of biomass for food and bio-based products fully respects the planet's finite boundaries. A sustainable circular bioeconomy contributes to the European Green Deal's objectives, including the mitigation of climate change through substituting renewable products and energy for fossil fuels and other carbon-intensive materials, and by contributing to carbon storage in products and ecosystems.

In May 2020, another important initiative that lies at the heart of the European Green Deal was adopted — the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) . This strategy aims to make food systems in the EU fair, healthy and environmentally friendly by ensuring sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption, and by minimising food loss.





**Figure 4: The European Green Deal**

The [EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030](#), also adopted in May 2020 as a part of the Green Deal, aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030, and contains specific actions and commitments, such as establishing a large EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea, launching an EU nature-restoration plan and introducing measures to tackle the global biodiversity challenge.

The [2030 Climate Target Plan](#) from September 2020 envisions reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to at least 55 % below their 1990 level by 2030 and sets Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate-neutral by 2050. This ambition was legally enshrined in July 2021 with the adoption of the [European Climate Law](#). Under the heading of 'Delivering the European Green Deal', the Commission put forward several legislative proposals, actions and targets for making Europe the first climate-neutral continent. These relate to the necessary transformation of our economies and societies, sustainable transport, clean energy, renovation of buildings, enhancing natural carbon sinks, and boosting global climate action. The [Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality](#) aims to ensure that the Union's transition towards a climate-neutral and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 is fair and leaves nobody behind. It sets out specific guidance to help EU Member States devise and implement policy packages to address the employment and social aspects for promoting a fair transition across all policies, notably climate, energy and environmental policies, as well as for making optimal use of public and private funding.

The [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#), adopted in December 2020, lays the foundation for how the EU transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises.

The [Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#) published in October 2020 is part of the EU's zero pollution ambition. The [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#) released in May 2021 calls for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, respecting the boundaries with which the planet can cope, thereby creating a toxic-free environment.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) outlines concrete actions to further implement the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a joint effort by the Member States and the EU, with the active involvement of social partners and civil society. The revised Social Scoreboard, which is also linked to the SDGs, was presented as part of the Action Plan to monitor progress towards the implementation of the Social Pillar principles within the European Semester. The Action Plan also proposes employment, skills and poverty reduction headline targets for the EU to be achieved by 2030. The new 2030 headline targets are consistent with the UN Sustainable

Development Goals and set the common ambition for a strong Social Europe.

Meanwhile, the 2021 update of EU's new [Industrial Strategy](#) supports the twin transition to a green and digital economy. It seeks to ensure that the European industry leads the way in delivering the EU's goals for a green, inclusive and resilient future. The strategy aims to boost support for the renewable energy and climate transition, while reinforcing the EU's strategic autonomy. In early 2023, the Commission moreover launched a [Green Deal Industrial Plan](#) to enhance the competitiveness of the EU's net-zero industry and support the transition to climate neutrality. The plan aims to provide a more supportive environment for scaling up the manufacturing capacity of the net-zero technologies and products that are required to meet the EU's climate targets. The Communication ['Long-term competitiveness of the EU: looking beyond 2030'](#) complements the Green Deal Industrial Plan with a long-term and comprehensive approach to the competitiveness of the EU.

Building on the European Green Deal, the [8th Environment Action Programme \(EAP\)](#) adopted in March 2022, anchors the Member States' commitment to environmental and climate action until 2030, guided by a long-term vision to 2050 of well-being for all, while staying within the planetary boundaries. The 8thEAP has six priority objectives related to climate neutrality, climate adaptation, circular economy, zero pollution, protecting and restoring biodiversity, and reducing environmental and climate pressures related to production and consumption. In addition, the programme sets out an enabling framework and a monitoring framework to measure progress towards the required systemic change. In March 2024, the Commission adopted the [8thEAP mid-term review](#), which takes stock of progress towards the objectives considering the enabling framework.

Over the past few years, the EU has adopted policies on sectors related to the SDGs. The [European Consensus on Development](#), adopted in 2017, translates the 2030 Agenda into the EU's shared vision and action framework for development cooperation. [Global Gateway](#) is the EU's strategy to support its partner countries in boosting smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors, and to strengthen health, education and research systems. It fully aligns with the 2030 Agenda as well as the Paris Agreement and brings together the EU, its Member States and their financial and development institutions as Team Europe.



Figure 5: Global Gateway and its key areas of partnership

The Team Europe approach was initially launched in early 2020, as a [package](#) to support partner countries in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, and to ensure a co-ordinated and comprehensive response between the EU and its Member States. The approach has quickly become the backbone of Global Europe (the main financial tool for EU international cooperation from 2021 to 2027) and its programming. It notably includes the conception of Team Europe Initiatives, which are the main mode of delivery of the Team Europe

approach.

Furthermore, [EU Cohesion Policy](#), including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund+ (ESF+), the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund (JTF), is also strongly aligned with the SDGs. It contributes to strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU and correcting imbalances between countries and regions. It delivers on the Union's political priorities, especially the green and digital transition.

The EU research and innovation programme [Horizon Europe](#) aims to support researchers and innovators to drive the systemic changes needed to ensure a green, healthy and resilient Europe.

In line with the [Political Guidelines](#), the SDGs have also been integrated into the [European Semester](#). For example, each European Semester country report includes an annex discussing the country's status, compared to the EU average, and progress in each SDG. The publication of the [Annual Sustainable Growth Survey \(ASGS\) 2024](#) in November 2023 launched the [2024 European Semester cycle](#). This ASGS put forward an ambitious agenda to further strengthen a coordinated EU policy response to enhance the EU's competitiveness through a green and digital transition, while ensuring social fairness and territorial cohesion.

The [national Recovery and Resilience Plans](#) (RRPs) are structured around six thematic pillars to which they contribute, as mentioned in the Regulation on the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#): green transition; digital transformation; economic cohesion, productivity and competitiveness; social and territorial cohesion; health, economic, social and institutional resilience; policies for the next generation. In doing so, they also cover the four dimensions of competitive sustainability outlined in the 2024 ASGS: (1) macroeconomic stability, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) productivity, and (4) fairness. Each of these dimensions relate to a set of SDGs and therefore the reforms and investments in the RRP are also expected to contribute to progress towards them. In the context of Europe's climate ambitions and of the digital transformation, all RRP need to focus strongly on both reforms and investments supporting the green and digital transitions. Each plan must provide a minimum of 37 % of the allocated funds to climate action and 20 % to digital spending. The plans approved have gone even beyond this and, on average, dedicate around 40 % of resources to climate-related measures and more than 26 % to the digital transition.

## Monitoring sustainable development in the EU

The European Commission is committed to monitoring progress towards the SDGs in the EU context. Since the adoption of the first EU SDG indicator set in May 2017, Eurostat has led the further development of the indicator framework in close cooperation with other Commission services, the European Environment Agency and EU Member organisations in the European Statistical System (ESS), involving also Council Committees and Working Parties as well as the civil society.







The EU SDG indicator set is structured along the 17 SDGs and covers the social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions of sustainability as represented by the 2030 Agenda. Each SDG is covered by six main indicators. They have been selected to reflect the SDGs' broad objectives and ambitions. Out of the 102 indicators, 34 are 'multi-purpose', meaning they are used to monitor more than one goal. This allows the link between different goals to be highlighted and enhances the narrative of this monitoring report. Sixty-eight of the current EU SDG indicators are aligned with the UN SDG indicators.

The UN indicators are selected for global level reporting for countries at all levels of development and are therefore not always relevant in an EU context. The EU SDG indicators have been selected to take into account their policy relevance from an EU perspective, availability, country coverage, data freshness and quality. They have strong links with EU policy initiatives, which means that preference is given to indicators which are also part of a high-level scoreboard of EU policies such as the [Social Scoreboard for the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) or the [Monitoring Framework for the 8thEAP](#). The EU SDG indicator set is open to annual reviews to consider new policy developments and include new indicators as methodologies, technologies and data sources evolve over time. The reviews involve many Commission services, European agencies such as the European Environment Agency (EEA), EU Member institutions in the [European Statistical System \(ESS\)](#), [European Council](#) committees and working parties as well as the civil society.

Based on the most recent EU SDG indicator set, the SDG monitoring reports also provide an assessment vis-à-vis SDG-related EU objectives and targets, visualised by arrow symbols. The assessment method considers whether an indicator has moved towards or away from the sustainable development objective, as well as the speed of this movement. Two different approaches are used for this assessment, depending on whether an explicit quantified



and measurable target exists for the EU (or not). These two approaches are explained in detail in Annex I. The assessment is usually done for the past 15- and 5-year periods of available data, providing an indication of whether a trend has been persistent or has shown a turnaround at a certain point in time. Table 1 shows the symbols used for the progress assessment and explains their meaning for the two approaches (indicators with and without quantitative targets).

Symbol	With quantitative target	Without quantitative target
	Trends for indicators marked with this 'target' symbol are calculated against an official and quantified EU policy target. In this case the arrow symbols should be interpreted according to the left-hand column below. Trends for all other indicators should be interpreted according to the right-hand column below.	
	Significant progress towards the EU target	Significant progress towards SD objectives
	Moderate progress towards the EU target	Moderate progress towards SD objectives
	[Category not applicable]	No progress towards nor movement away from SD objectives
	Insufficient progress towards the EU target	Moderate movement away from SD objectives
	Movement away from the EU target	Significant movement away from SD objectives
:	Calculation of trend not possible (for example, time series too short)	

**Table 1: Explanation of symbols for indicating progress towards SD objectives and targets**

The trend assessments presented in the EU SDG monitoring reports are based on the indicators selected for the EU SDG indicator set and the applied methodology. Depending on the scope of the report and the applied methodology, the assessment scope and outcomes can differ from other reports of the European Commission or the EEA for example when these assessments also take into account planned measures or projections instead of past trends only.

## Notes

### Explore further

#### Other articles

- [All articles on sustainable development goals](#)

## Database

- [Sustainable development indicators](#)

## Dedicated section

- [Sustainable development indicators](#)

## Methodology

More detailed information on EU SDG indicators for monitoring of progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as indicator relevance, definitions, methodological notes, background and potential linkages can be found in theas well as in Annex II of the publication '[Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context — 2024 edition](#)'