

THE MOST IMPORTANT GOALS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**Sonja JOVANOVIĆ***University of Niš , Faculty of Economics Niš
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ivanica1404@yahoo.com***Abstract**

More efficient use of resources and economy based on the principles of sustainable development presents a development opportunity that will enable long-term socio-economic development. Therefore, the European Union is extremely active in the creation and implementation of environmental policies, with a view to its conservation, prevention from degradation, and quality improvement, because it gives natural resources necessary for the overall development. Numerous directives, regulations, and rules of the European Union in the field of environmental protection have changed over the years, in the direction of introducing complex measures for the protection of the environment and indicators for monitoring sustainable development achievements. The latest in a series of documents governing the issue of sustainable development is Agenda 2030, where the majority of sustainable development goals is directly linked to the environment and focus on the sustainability of natural resources. At the same time, a preliminary Sustainable Development Index Goal (SDG Index) has been developed, summarizing trends of a set of indicators monitoring the achievement of sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030. The subject of the paper is an analysis of strategic documents dedicated to sustainable development and environmental protection in the European Union, with the aim of showing their development path over time.

Key words: *sustainable development, environmental protection, the European Union, Sustainable Development Goal Index (SDG Index)*

JEL Classification: Q01, Q50, Q58

I. INTRODUCTION

The global problem caused by uncontrolled economic activity is environmental pollution. The rapid scientific and technological development, application of new and powerful sources of energy, construction of a large number of industrial facilities, and creation of large urban areas have led, particularly in recent decades, to a pronounced pollution level of basic natural resources, disruption of harmony between man and the environment, and endangerment of natural conditions necessary for the preservation of environment. The overall effects caused by pollution are not only harmful to the environment, but also call into question the survival of mankind and economic life, which is the main cause of the current state of the environment. Environmental protection and its improvement are one of the most important global problems facing contemporary society.

Over the years, an increasing degree of environmental degradation in the European Union has imposed a need to define environmental policy and the principles of pollution prevention and environmental protection. The regulations of the European Union in the field of environmental protection are extremely abundant and account for approximately one third of the total number of European Union regulations, and are aimed at different segments of environmental protection, such as protection of water, air, soil, rules against climate change, and others. The focus of these directives and regulations is on preventive action and sustainable development, which may affect the protection of the environment for present and future generations. Sustainable development implies equilibrium between the economic, social, and environmental components of development, meaning that economic activity may not take place to the detriment of the environment and society.

The concept of sustainable development was introduced in the EU law through the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, and its precursor is the concept of sustainable growth, which found its place among the objectives of the European Community through the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. The Europe 2020 Strategy is one of the most significant documents of the future development of the European Union. It presents sustainable development as a source for efficient, green, and competitive economy to be strived for in the future. Closely linked to this strategy is the Lisbon Treaty, whose provisions state that sustainable development is a key objective of the European Union. That sustainable development is very important, just like environmental protection and the improvement of environmental quality, is demonstrated in Agenda 21, which defines the indicators for monitoring sustainable

development. Replacement of Agenda 21 has recently appeared, as the new universal humanity agenda – Agenda 2030, which fosters development by 2030 through 17 key sustainability goals. In this regard, the subject of the work is the analysis of strategic documents dedicated to sustainable development and environmental protection in the European Union with the aim of showing their development path.

II. RESEARCH CONTEXT

At the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, the participants expressed their concern for the global problem of environmental pollution. Protection and improvement of the environment stand for the most significant problems that can have a major effect on the wellbeing of people as well as on the economic growth. Therefore, in the document entitled “Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment” it was pointed out that “man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and wellbeing, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations” (Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972). At the period at which this conference was organized, European Community (EC) started to redevelop interest in the problems related to environmental protection, as well as in the necessity of implementing common environmental policy at the level of the entire EC. Therefore, in 1972 an active policy in the field of protection and improvement of human environment started, which was marked by the adoption of “The First Environmental Action Programme” (EU Environmental Policy Handbook – A Critical Analysis of EU Environmental Legislation, 2005) for the period from 1973 to 1976.

European Community’s jurisdiction regarding the field of environmental protection is defined by “The Single European Act” (The Single European Act, 1987) that came into force on July 1st 1987. Special significance of this Act is reflected in the fact that it points out the basic principles of the European Community’s environmental policy. These principles are based on the prevention of pollution, “prevention of damage at source”, “the polluter pays” principle, as well as on the necessity of integration of environmental protection policy into other sector policies of the European Community.

According to the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union 1993) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (Treaty on European Union (Consolidated version, 1997) (Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, The Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Related Acts, 1997)), European Union was given specific powers in the domain of protection and improvement of human environment. “EU is considered to have the highest authority in the domain of environmental protection, where, apart from performing domestic jurisdiction, EU acts as the international subject in concluding international agreements and implementing other forms of cooperation. In this way, two legal systems that exist simultaneously were established – at the level of the Union and at the level of its member states” (Ivanjac 1999, 154).

According to the Article B of the Treaty on European Union 1993, which stands for the part of the Common Provisions, the European Union’s primary objective is “to promote economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable” (Treaty on European Union, 1993). Besides, Article 3, apart from other activities, states the necessity of creating “a policy in the sphere of the environment” (Treaty on European Union, 1993). This pointed to the need for focusing the future development on the established balance among the economic, social and environmental components of the concept of sustainable development.

The Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 stressed sustainable development as one of the European Union’s objectives. According to the Article 6 “environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities” (Treaty on European Union (Consolidated version, 1997) (Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, The Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Related Acts)).

The significance of integration of environmental policy into other sector policies was stressed within the document entitled “Integrating environment and sustainable development into economic and development co-operation policy – Elements of a comprehensive strategy” of 2000 (Integrating environment and sustainable development into economic and development co-operation policy – Elements of a comprehensive strategy, 2000). Implementation of the concept of sustainable development required coherence of policies within various fields (agriculture, industry, trade, fishing etc.). With the purpose of improving the condition of human environment, countries carried out structural adjustments. “There is a continuing need to integrate environmental concerns into structural adjustment policies in order to achieve sustainable economic growth without environmental degradation. The likely risks and opportunities with regard to the environment need to be carefully assessed in the preparatory studies” (Integrating environment and sustainable development into economic and development co-operation policy – Elements of a comprehensive strategy, 2000). This document stressed the significance of creating studies on the environmental impacts for each country. These studies served as the basis for creating the policy of development in all sectors. These studies were also useful for creating strategies of sustainable development that all countries were obliged to create until 2002 on the basis of

conclusions from the UN General Assembly 1997 conference known as “Rio plus 5” (Earth Summit II – Five years after Rio, What next?, 1997).

In June 2001 in Gothenburg “A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development” (A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development, 2001) was presented. Major threats and challenges of further development of the European Union were seen in: climate changes, public health and food security, poverty, population ageing, biodiversity loss and traffic volume growth. This Strategy represented the preparation for the ensuing World Summit on Sustainable development that took place in Johannesburg in 2002.

In 2006 “Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) – Renewed Strategy” (Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) – Renewed Strategy 2006) was adopted. This Strategy stressed the major challenge that European Union was faced with and that referred to the provision of intergenerational equality. One of the objectives of the Strategy was to “maintain a momentum that mutually reinforces economic growth, social welfare and environment protection“ (Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) – Renewed Strategy 2006).

One of the most significant strategies in European Union nowadays is “Europa 2020” (Europa 2020, 2010). Sustainable development, presented as the need for “resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy” (Europa 2020, 2010), stands for one of the objectives of this Strategy.

“The Treaty of Lisbon” (Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2009) was adopted in 2009. “Compared to the previous Treaties on European Union and their environmental provisions, the Treaty of Lisbon introduced some novelties. One of the most significant novelties of the Treaty of Lisbon was that this Treaty was the first Treaty that set environmental protection as well as ‘the improvement of the quality of environment’ as the primary environmental objective, contrary to previous Treaties that prescribed ‘environmental protection’ only” (Kostić, Gasmi, 2007).

The primary objective of the Treaty of Lisbon was to “help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development” (Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2009), which was stated in Article 21. Furthermore, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, as well as the sustainable management of resources with the purpose of achieving sustainable development stand for some of the objectives stated within this Treaty. Article 3 of this Treaty stresses the responsibility of the European Union in the field of achievement of global sustainability. Therefore, according to this Treaty, European Union will advocate inter-country dialogue and cooperation and will contribute to the process of finding solutions to economic, social and environmental problems at the global level. Balanced development, which implies strong economic development as well as rational management of limited resources, represents the concept on which the future development of the European Union will be based on (Council of the European Union).

Management of the concept of sustainable development requires the establishment of institutional framework as well as the development of measures of basic performances, that is, dimensions of sustainable development. Purposes of tracing the achieved level of sustainable development and creating the conditions for the creation of policy and strategy of development require the development of a set of indicators of sustainable development. This objective was stated in Agenda 21. Agenda 21 is the document that represents the action plan for the implementation of sustainable development and that was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This document stated that “countries at the national level and international governmental and non-governmental organizations at the international level should develop the concept of indicators of sustainable development in order to identify such indicators” (Agenda 21, Section IV. Means of Implementation, Chapter 40 – Information for Decision-Making, Paragraph 40.6, 1992). Some of the most significant indicators for tracing the achieved level of sustainable development, that is, for tracing the implementation of “A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development” are: “Growth rate of real GDP per capita, Resource productivity, People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, Employment rate of older workers, Healthy life years and life expectancy at birth, Greenhouse gas emissions, Energy consumption of transport relative to GDP etc.” (Eurostat, 2015).

At the United Nations Summit held in New York in late September 2015, the Development Agenda 2030 for the next 15 years was adopted. Agenda 2030 is focused on sustainable development, and clearly defines what the world wants in the future through a long set of sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015). The focus of this development plan is the global intention to integrate environmental development with economic and social development. In this regard, the main characteristic of Agenda 2030 relates to the recognition that social and economic development depend on the sustainable management of the natural environment and its resources (Terama et al. 2015).

Eradication of poverty and hunger, achieving gender equality, improving the living standards, and taking urgent action to combat climate change are some of the development priorities that seek to transform the development models and contribute to a sustainable future. The greatest global challenge and a necessary

condition for sustainable development is certainly the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions. The envisaged world is the one in which the models of production, consumption, and utilization of all natural resources are sustainable, and where humankind lives in harmony with nature, while protecting biodiversity. Sustainable development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combatting inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent. Overall aspiration of the new Agenda is creating conditions for sustainable, inclusive, and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities (United Nations, 2015).

New universal humanity agenda – Agenda 2030 is a replacement for Agenda 21, adopted in 1992, and largely relies on its development postulates. The program includes 17 ambitious development goals, on which additional 169 related sub-goals build. Basically, these goals are deeply connected with the Millennium Development Goals of 2000 (United Nations, 2000), and try to complete what the previous ones did not. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, which focused on targeted developing countries, Agenda 2030 is the first universal global agreement with a comprehensive plan of action that will affect all countries (European Commission, 2015). Addis Ababa Action Agenda is an integral part of Agenda 2030, which defines various modes, policies, instruments, and resources required for implementing the goals set. Resources allocated at regional level for the protection of the environment can be much better used if one bears in mind the sustainable development goals envisaged by the Agenda 2030. In order to achieve adequate capacity in the implementation of Agenda 2030, countries and regions need to establish mechanisms that relate to efficient management of natural capital, including earlier damage caused to the environment and depletion of natural resources. There is no doubt that sustainably managing the environment offers a cost-effective mechanism for implementing the sustainable development goals. What is urgently needed now are strategies to sustainably harness the world's environmental resources, including appropriate policies and practices to reverse ecosystems degradation and combat environmental crimes, and prioritized allocation of current earnings from environmental resources to catalytic environment-based sectors (Thiaw, 2016).

The most important objectives envisaged by the Agenda 2030 are: 1) End poverty in all its forms everywhere, 2) end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, 3) ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, 4) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, 5) achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 6) ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, 7) ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, 8) promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, 9) build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation, 10) reduce inequality within and among countries, 11) make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, 12) ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, 13) take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, 14) conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, 15) protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, 16) promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and 17) strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015).

Eradicating poverty in all its forms is one of the biggest challenges facing mankind since its inception. Over the years, the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen by more than 50%, but there is still a large number of those who are struggling to meet basic human needs. In the following years until 2030, this objective envisages to redirect all those who live in the affected areas to safer regions with better living conditions, to reduce at least by half the proportion of people of all ages regardless of gender who live in poverty, to increase access to basic resources and services, and support communities affected by conflicts and climate disasters (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

In addition to increasing productivity and more rapid economic growth at the beginning of XXI century, extreme hunger and malnutrition are still an obstacle to development in a large number of countries, although the percentage of undernourished people in this period fell by almost half. The reason for the existence of undernourished people today is environmental degradation, drought, and loss of biodiversity. To eliminate all forms of hunger and malnutrition, it is essential that all people have access to sufficient quantities of high-quality and safe food. In this regard, the focus should be on promoting sustainable agricultural production while improving the living standard of small farmers who will have equal access to land, technology, and market. In the future, there should be a sustainable system of food production and resistant agricultural practice implemented, which is more productive and brings higher yields, while maintaining ecosystems and capacity building adapted to climate change (extreme weather conditions – drought, floods). In addition, genetic diversity of seeds, plants, and animals should be maintained, along with increase in investment in rural infrastructure,

agricultural research, prevention of trade restrictions and distortions on world agricultural markets, and ensuring the proper food reserves so as to avoid shortages of certain agricultural products (United Nations Development Programme, 2015)..

The goal of Agenda 2030 concerning ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth, productive employment, and work for all has been derived from the expansion of inequality and employment, which is not in line with the growth of labor force. To achieve the expected sustainable economic growth, it is necessary to achieve a higher level of productivity, through the application of technological innovation. Policies should be aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship, job creation, and development of effective measures for the suppression of forced labor. Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries. Finally, the share of young people in unemployment should be reduced, along with the improvement of the system of education and training, and strengthening occupational safety and health in legal terms (United Nations, 2015).

The achievement of the expected economic growth and sustainable development calls for reducing environmental pressures, namely a change in the mode of production and consumption of naturally limited resources. Agriculture is a sector of the economy that mostly uses natural resources in the course of production. Therefore, agricultural practices should be directed to the rational application of resources, with minimal and reversible damage to the environment. Efficient management of natural resources and toxic waste and pollutants are important sub-goals to achieve this goal. A large share of the world population is still consuming far too little to meet even their basic needs. Halving per capita global food waste at the retailer and consumer levels is also important for creating more efficient production and supply chains. This can help with food security and shift us towards a more resource efficient economy (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Climate changes are one of the most important environmental concerns. There is no country in the world that is not affected by climate changes and that does not bear the consequences of drastic climate changes. Causes of climate changes are certainly the increased gas emissions caused by the greenhouse effect, which leads to global warming, earth tremor, and altered movement of water (Scutaru, 2013). To prevent further consequences and reduce the impact of causes, it is necessary to take urgent action at a global level, reflected in the provision of effective measures within the framework of national policies and strategies and the strengthening of capacities and resilience to climate changes and natural disasters in all countries, and to increase awareness of the possible consequences caused by climate changes and promote capacity building mechanisms for effective planning and management of climate changes.

III. INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All goals defined in Agenda 2030 are very demanding, and essentially based on three dimensions of sustainable development – economic development, social inclusion, and environmental protection with the support of good governance. Monitoring of the achievement of the goals set relies on a large number of indicators developed, which need to be monitored over time in order to have a true picture of how much has been achieved in relation to the target. There are composite indices and indicators that encompass several indicators from the field of economic, ecological and social dimension of sustainability. Some of these indicators and indices are: Environmental Performance Index (EPI), Sustainable Society Index (SSI), Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare, European Benchmark Indicators, Ecological Footprint, Environmentally Sustainable National Income, etc. In that sense, tracing of implementation of the objectives of sustainable development stands for a multidimensional and complex process that requires high level of comparability of indicators. One of the latest developed indices, according to available data on the trend of most of the indicators, is preliminary SDG Index³. This index can be used to identify priorities and encourage countries to take action towards sustainable development (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016). According to the results of SDG Index, 147 countries around the world have been ranked according to the current situation in terms of sustainable development goals. Methodology for calculating SDG Index was developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, is quite complex, and includes a large number of variables.

Preliminary SDG Index ranks countries according to three aggregate methods: (A) arithmetic mean (weak sustainability with infinite substitution), (G) geometric mean (linear elasticity of substitution), and (L) Leontief production function (hard sustainability with no substitution) (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016). The analysis in this paper relied on the selection of Southeast Europe countries, whose rank by all three ranking methods is shown in Table 1, among other countries of the European Union and the Western Balkans.

³Sustainable Development Goal Index (SDG Index), based on United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), is an unofficial measure that does not replace official statistics, and was presented in the draft document, Preliminary Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index and Dashboard.

Table 1 Ranking of EU and Western Balkan countries according to preliminary SDG Index for 2016

EU Countries	SDG Index			EU Countries	SDG Index			Western Balkan Countries	SDG Index		
	A	G	L		A	G	L		A	G	L
Sweden	1	1	1	Czech Republic	21	19	63	Albania	51	60	36
Denmark	2	2	7	Italy	23	23	21	Bosnia and Herzegovina	53	47	71
Finland	3	3	6	Malta	24	27	12	Macedonia, FYR	58	64	34
Austria	6	6	11	Greece	25	28	32	Montenegro	35	37	16
Germany	7	8	20	Slovakia	26	24	17	Serbia	45	44	49
United Kingdom	9	11	8	Croatia	27	32	24				
France	10	12	4	Hungary	28	33	5				
Netherlands	12	9	33	Latvia	32	34	39				
Belgium	13	13	23	Estonia	33	25	95				
Portugal	14	18	3	Lithuania	34	36	41				
Slovenia	15	16	25	Poland	37	38	35				
Spain	16	20	2	Cyprus	39	43	26				
Ireland	17	21	10	Bulgaria	40	40	53				
Luxemburg	18	15	48	Romania	41	45	14				

Source: UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2016). Preliminary Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index and Dashboard

If the ranking of countries according to the A method is considered, the top-ranked countries in the world are ten highly developed European countries, namely: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and France. On the other hand, at the bottom of the rankings are low developed countries, which are, in terms of the Agenda 2030, very far in achieving its goals, primarily because of their natural, economic, and social characteristics. This group includes: Ethiopia, Mauritania, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Niger, Chad, and Congo (United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2016).

Following the ranking according to the A method, one can observe significant differences among the countries of Southeast Europe (Western Balkan countries and Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania). In this group of countries, the highest ranked is Slovenia, which is in the 15th position. Behind it in the group, and almost 15 places lower in the overall rankings, are Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, and Serbia, i.e. between 35th and 45th position in the rankings of all the analyzed world countries. Around 50th position in the world list, according to preliminary SDG Index, and at the bottom of the list of countries of Southeast Europe, there are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Macedonia. The position of countries selected for analysis by preliminary SDG Index is in line with the level of economic development, preservation of environment, and the social situation, i.e. higher level of SDG index indicates a higher level of economic development, environmental protection and social welfare. (Kostić et al., 2016).

Along with the ranking of countries according to preliminary SDG Index, there is an overview of priority and acute problems in terms of sustainable development, to be addressed in OECD countries. In the group of countries of Southeast Europe, only two countries are a part of OECD, Slovenia and Hungary. Critical objectives for Slovenia based on the dashboard are: ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth, productive employment, and decent work for all; making resistant infrastructure and promoting comprehensive and sustainable industrialization and innovation, and strengthening of modes of implementation and revitalization of global partnerships for sustainable development. In case of Hungary, in addition to these three critical targets that are listed for Slovenia, the goal that is alarming concerns the realization of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. These two countries should primarily invest efforts to improve the status of areas defined in the context of these goals and then focus on the other.

IV. CONCLUSION

Preservation of the environment and promoting economic growth have for many years been seen as opposites that have a dual nature. This understanding has begun to change over time, with the emerging awareness of sustainable development that can be incorporated into economic activity. The EU countries accepted this stance in particular, and were pioneers in promoting sustainable growth and environmental protection in the conduct of economic activities. Specifically, the EU produced plenty of documents that govern the issue of environmental protection and focused future development on a balance between economic, social,

and environmental components of sustainable development. Implementation of sustainable development requires coherent policies in various fields, while its realization is monitored by numerous indicators.

Agenda 2030 is the latest and most comprehensive document at the level of the European Union, which seeks to meet the key sustainable development goals, in order to make the world more stable and better place to live. It is a universal action plan for people, planet, and prosperity. Agenda defines goals and tasks for the next fifteen years, concerning eradication of poverty and hunger in the world, environmental protection from degradation, including sustainable consumption and production, sustainable management of natural resources, urgent measures to address climate changes, and other important areas for the survival of mankind. Achievement of the ambitious goals of the Agenda can be viewed using the preliminary SDG Index, which can be used to identify priorities and encourage countries to take action.

According to preliminary SDG Index, countries of Southeast Europe are in the first third of the global list of countries taken for analysis. In this group of countries, Slovenia is the highest ranked, with its 15th position in the rankings, while the lowest ranked country is Macedonia. The position of countries selected for analysis by preliminary SDG Index is in line with the level of economic development, preservation of the environment, and social situation.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper is realized within project No 179066 financed by Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia.

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