

Evaluating Progress in Achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals: A Comparative Analysis

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KEYWORDS: sustainable development goals (SDGs), entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, government support, global entrepreneurship monitor (GEM), comparative analysis

ABSTRACT – This study aims to explore the perceived progress in fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national level. Using the data from 2022 and 2023 for 43 countries, sourced from the contributions of 3,690 national experts, we assess the perceived progress in areas critical to sustainable development, including social contribution, social responsibility, investor interests, economic opportunities for minority groups, environmentally conscious practices, energy efficiency, national cultural values towards sustainability, SDG-aligned business activities and government support for sustainability-focused businesses. The assessment covers twelve key aspects to determine the extent to which new and growing companies and the broader business and policy environment are aligned with the SDGs. The main objective is to identify trends, achievements and areas for improvement in integrating the SDGs into business operations and policy frameworks. Research methods include a quantitative analysis of the GEM database (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, the world's foremost study of entrepreneurship), comparative statistical analysis and trend evaluation to provide a comprehensive overview of the progress made between 2022 and 2023. This research is crucial to understanding the effectiveness of current strategies and identifying the need for further action to achieve the SDGs.

Izvirni znanstveni članek

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KLJUČNE BESEDE: cilji trajnostnega razvoja (SDG), podjetništvo, okoljska trajnost, vladna podpora, Globalni podjetniški monitor (GEM), primerjalna analiza

POVZETEK – Namen prispevka je raziskati napredek pri uresničevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov (SDG) na nacionalni ravni. Na podlagi podatkov iz let 2022 in 2023 za 43 držav, pridobljenih na osnovi anketiranja 3.690 nacionalnih izvedencev, ocenjujemo zaznani napredek na področjih, ki so ključna za trajnostni razvoj, vključno z družbenim prispevkom, družbeno odgovornostjo, interesi vlagateljev, gospodarskimi priložnostmi za manjšinske skupine, okoljsko ozaveščenimi praksami, energetska učinkovitostjo, nacionalnimi kulturnimi vrednotami do trajnostnega razvoja, s poslovnimi dejavnostmi, usklajenimi s SDG, in z vladno podporo podjetjem, usmerjenim v trajnostni razvoj. Ocena zajema dvanajst ključnih vidikov s katerimi se ugotavlja, v kolikšni meri so nova in rastoča podjetja ter širše poslovno in politično okolje usklajeni s cilji trajnostnega razvoja. Glavni cilj je opredeliti trende, dosežke in področja za izboljšave pri vključevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja v poslovne dejavnosti in politične okvire. Raziskovalne metode vključujejo kvantitativno analizo podatkovne baze GEM (Globalni podjetniški monitor, najobsežnejše svetovne raziskave podjetništva), primerjalno statistično analizo in oceno trendov, da bi zagotovili celovit pregled napredka, doseženega med letoma 2022 in 2023. Raziskava je ključna za razumevanje učinkovitosti zdajšnjih strategij in identifikacijo potreb po nadaljnjem ukrepanju za doseganje ciljev trajnostnega razvoja.

1 Introduction

The launch of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 was a pivotal moment in the global effort to promote prosperity while protecting the

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planet. These 17 interlinked goals were intended to be a "blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all" by 2030, addressing the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Amidst these far-reaching and ambitious goals, the roles of entrepreneurship and government policy in achieving the SDGs have become increasingly important. This study embarks on an exploratory journey to assess the perceived progress in integrating the SDGs into Slovenia's national framework in comparison to other European countries and the global landscape. By evaluating the contributions of 3,690 national experts and analyzing the data from 2022 and 2023 from 43 countries, this research aims to uncover the perceived progress and the remaining gaps in aligning business practices and policy decisions with the SDGs.

Numerous research findings underline the crucial role of entrepreneurship in promoting sustainable development. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) has consistently highlighted entrepreneurship as a key force for economic growth and innovation, and for addressing social and environmental challenges (Bosma & Kelley, 2019). Similarly, different studies have emphasized the importance of government support in fostering an ecosystem conducive to SDG-aligned business activities (e.g. Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). This interplay between entrepreneurial aspirations and policy frameworks is critical to making progress towards achieving the SDGs. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on environmental sustainability, social responsibility and economic inclusion in the business sector. Researchers argue that businesses, especially new and growing businesses, have an important role to play in promoting sustainable economic opportunities, improving energy efficiency and implementing environmentally conscious practices (Doherty et al., 2014). In addition, the incorporation of national cultural values related to sustainability and the alignment of investor interests with the SDGs are seen as important drivers of this change (Hall et al., 2010).

Using the extensive data from the GEM NES database, this study examines the extent of integration of the SDGs into the entrepreneurial and political spheres in Slovenia, other European countries and globally from 2022 to 2023. It aims to identify trends and achievements, and to highlight areas that require further improvement. Through this analysis, the study contributes critical insights into the effectiveness of strategies used to achieve the SDGs and underlines the urgent need for increased efforts to fulfill these global goals.

2 Literature Review

This chapter looks at the existing research on the role of entrepreneurship and government support, as well as their collective impact on achieving the SDGs, highlighting the complexities and opportunities within this interplay.

2.1 Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a crucial driver of sustainable development. Cohen and Winn (2007) argue that market imperfections, particularly those that lead to environmental degradation, provide entrepreneurs with unique opportunities to simultaneously generate profits and address sustainability challenges. This concept is further explored by York and Venkataraman (2010), who argue that entrepreneurship is critical to the transition to a sustainable economy by developing new markets, products and services that mitigate environmental and social issues. More recent research builds on these ideas and explores how entrepreneurial action contributes to overcoming market and environmental challenges, thereby promoting a sustainable economy. Coardos et al. (2023) highlight how entrepreneurial activities can generate innovative business ideas that contribute to sustainable development despite their environmental impact. Omri (2017) finds that entrepreneurship in high-income countries often follows an inverted U-shaped relationship with environmental degradation, suggesting that beyond a certain point, entrepreneurship reduces environmental harm. Johnson and Schaltegger (2020) introduce a multilevel framework that links entrepreneurial processes and market transformations to societal developments, offering deeper insights into how entrepreneurship facilitates sustainable development.

The pursuit of sustainable development, which encompasses economic growth, social equity and environmental protection, requires an integrated approach. Abe-reijo (2016) suggests that entrepreneurship in developing countries should address sustainability challenges holistically, considering social, economic and environmental factors. This integration aligns entrepreneurial efforts with broader sustainability goals, potentially enhancing societal well-being and environmental health. Dhahri and Omri (2018) confirm that entrepreneurship positively impacts the economic and social pillars of sustainability, but can have a negative impact on the environmental pillar, highlighting the need for balanced policy measures. Hudek and Bradac Hojnik (2020) provide empirical evidence that innovative and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship positively influences sustainable development, whereas this is not the case for necessity-driven entrepreneurship, which is often motivated by immediate financial needs. This underlines the importance of the nature and motivation of entrepreneurial activities for achieving sustainability. Furthermore, sustainable entrepreneurship, which Schaltegger and Wagner (2011) define as recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities to improve environmental and social conditions, is crucial. Belz and Binder (2017) propose a model of sustainable entrepreneurship that emphasizes the progressive integration of economic, social and environmental goals.

In summary, entrepreneurship not only makes an important contribution to sustainable development, but also brings with it complex challenges that require well thought-out political and entrepreneurial strategies to ensure that economic activities make a constructive contribution to sustainability. This necessitates fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports innovative, responsible and opportunity-driven ventures that are aligned with environmental protection and sustainability goals, as discussed by Galindo-Martín et al. (2020) and Singh and Indraves (2023).

2.2 Government Support for Sustainability

The vital role of government support in fostering environments conducive to SDG-aligned entrepreneurship is well documented and underscores the power of comprehensive policy frameworks to promote sustainable business practices. Hall et al. (2010) note that policy frameworks and incentives can profoundly influence entrepreneurial activities, particularly those aimed at sustainability. Mechanisms such as financial incentives, regulatory frameworks and support programs can significantly mitigate the risks associated with sustainable innovation (Kuckertz & Wagner, 2010). In addition, Zioło and Ghoul (2019) emphasize the importance of government size and the application of public policy instruments in fostering a favorable environment for sustainable entrepreneurship, suggesting that both financial and non-financial support are crucial for fostering sustainable business practices.

Government policies can also play a dual role in either facilitating or hindering the integration of sustainability into business strategies. Doherty et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of supportive government policies, such as tax benefits or grants, in enabling social enterprises to effectively address social and environmental challenges. Extending this dialogue, Goyal et al. (2020) examine the impact of government policies on green entrepreneurship and argue for targeted subsidies and regulatory support for eco-friendly business practices.

The influence of government support extends to fostering innovation within sustainable business models. Bocken et al. (2020) examine how innovation grants and R&D tax credits can lower the financial barriers to sustainable innovation and thus accelerate the pace of sustainable business practices. As the global urgency to achieve the SDGs increases, governments are also pursuing more integrated policy approaches. Kivimaa and Kern (2021) discuss the need for a coherent policy mix that addresses financial, regulatory and informational barriers to sustainability, and emphasize the need for a synergistic approach to policymaking to advance comprehensive sustainability goals effectively. This holistic approach ensures that government interventions are well coordinated and support the overall sustainable development objectives.

2.3 The Interaction Between Entrepreneurship, Government Support and Sustainable Development

Entrepreneurial ventures are essential for driving innovation and market transformation towards sustainability, but their success often depends on government policies. Hall and Wagner (2012) emphasize that coherent policy frameworks are crucial to align entrepreneurial activities with the SDGs. Furthermore, Kolk et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of cross-sector collaboration and point to the need to unite governments, businesses and civil society to tackle the broad challenges posed by the SDGs effectively. Such collaborations are pivotal for fostering innovative solutions and achieve sustainable results.

The interplay between entrepreneurship, government support and sustainable development is crucial for progress towards achieving the SDGs. Entrepreneurs can significantly drive sustainable development if they are supported by enabling government

policies. These policies, in turn, shape the operational landscape for sustainable enterprises, suggesting that the success of the SDGs is highly dependent on the synergy between entrepreneurial innovation and strategic policy support. This discussion raises an important question about Slovenia's efforts in this area: "How does Slovenia's progress in fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals compare to other European countries and the global landscape between 2022 and 2023, particularly in areas such as social contribution, economic opportunities for minority groups and government support for sustainability-oriented businesses?" This question aims to analyze Slovenia's integration of the SDGs into its national policy and entrepreneurial framework, offering insights into how it navigates the complexities and opportunities presented by its commitment to sustainable development alongside European and global counterparts.

3 Methodology

The methodology of the study includes the analysis of the data from 2022 and 2023 for 43 countries with the input from 3,690 national experts. National experts are carefully selected experts in the field of entrepreneurship, mainly entrepreneurs, managers, professors, support service providers, consultants and other professionals. The study assesses 12 critical areas of sustainable development, ranking them on a scale of 0 to 10 (0=completely disagree, 10 =completely agree), to measure the alignment of new companies and the overall business and policy sector with the SDGs.

To analyze the data, we used a non-parametric test for two independent samples, as in the first stage we analyzed whether there are statistically significant differences in the implementation of the UN SDGs between European and non-European countries from 2022 to 2023. In the next step, we conducted a comparative analysis of the perceived implementation of the UN SDGs between Slovenia, European and non-European countries. The average values were presented in graphs.

The pursuit of the SDGs was measured with: SDGS_1: New and growing companies increasingly prioritize their social contribution rather than focusing solely on profit and wealth creation; SDGS_2: New and growing companies integrate social responsibility principles into their business operations; SDGS_3: Investors are particularly interested in funding new companies that focus on social responsibility; SDGE_1: Companies see paying taxes as part of their social responsibility; SDGE_2: Investors and stakeholders are satisfied with the economic performance of companies in which they have invested; SDGE_3: New and growing companies founded by members of minority groups have the same economic opportunities as other new companies; SDGN_1: Most new and growing companies use environmentally conscious practices in manufacturing products or providing services; SDGN_2: Most new and growing companies prioritize energy efficiency practices in their operations; SDGN_3: Most new and growing companies see environmental issues as a potential opportunity; SDGC_1: Sustainability practices are seen as very important within the

national culture; SDGC_2: There are prominent examples of entrepreneurial activities related to the SDGs within the business sector; SDGG_1: The national government has specific regulations that support sustainability-focused startups; SDGG_2: The national government supports sustainability-focused companies through grants, special rights and/or tax reductions.

4 Results and Discussion

Before analyzing the progress between 2022 and 2023, we first conducted tests to determine if there were statistically significant differences between European and non-European countries. This allowed us to systematically evaluate how approaches to sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and government support for sustainability-focused companies differ between these two groups of countries over the time period. The analysis was crucial for understanding the dynamics of global sustainable development efforts and forms the basis for further in-depth analysis of specific trends.

Table 1

Differences between European and non-European countries in pursuing the UN SDGs

	2022			2023		
	Mann-W-hitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Mann-W-hitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
In my country, new and growing companies increasingly prioritize their social contribution rather than solely focusing on profit and wealth creation	202,000	-0.705	0.481	197,000	-0.804	0.422
In my country, new and growing companies integrate social responsibility principles into their business operations	177,000	-1.312	0.189	166,500	-1.546	0.122
In my country, investors are particularly interested in funding new companies that focus on social responsibility	222,000	-0.219	0.827	214,000	-0.390	0.697
In my country, companies see paying taxes as part of their social responsibility	193,000	-0.923	0.356	182,500	-1.157	0.247
In my country, investors and stakeholders are satisfied with the economic performance of companies they have invested in	131,000	-2.430	0.015	163,000	-1.631	0.103

	2022			2023		
	Mann-W-hitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Mann-W-hitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
In my country, new and growing companies founded by members of minority groups have the same economic opportunities as other new companies	110,000	-2.940	0.003	148,000	-1.997	0.046
In my country, most new and growing companies implement environmentally-conscious practices when producing products or supplying services	128,000	-2.503	0.012	148,500	-1.985	0.047
In my country, most new and growing companies prioritize energy efficiency practices in their operations	93,000	-3.353	0.001	100,500	-3.153	0.002
In my country, most new and growing companies see environmental problems as a potential opportunity	147,000	-2.041	0.041	150,000	-1.948	0.051
In my country, sustainability practices are seen as very important within the national culture	211,000	-0.486	0.627	221,000	-0.219	0.827
In my country, there are prominent examples of entrepreneurial activities related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the business sector	176,000	-1.336	0.181	219,500	-0.256	0.798
In my country, the national government has specific regulations that support sustainability-focused startups	196,000	-0.850	0.395	226,000	-0.097	0.922
In my country, the national government supports sustainability-focused companies through grants, special rights and/or tax cuts	203,000	-0.680	0.496	216,500	-0.329	0.742

The results from Table 1 illustrate notable differences between European and non-European countries in their approach to integrating the UN SDGs into business practice, particularly in certain areas, such as economic opportunities for minority groups, environmental practices and energy efficiency. These differences shed light on regional disparities in prioritizing and implementing sustainability in various dimensions.

There is a statistically significant difference between European and non-European countries in terms of economic opportunities for minority-owned businesses. In 2022, the significance level was 0.003, indicating a robust difference that still exists in 2023, albeit at a less pronounced level ($p=0.046$). This suggests that non-European countries may lag behind European countries in providing equitable economic opportunities, highlighting a potential area for policy intervention and support. There was also a

statistically significant difference in the implementation of environmentally conscious practices ($p=0.012$ in 2022 and $p=0.047$ in 2023), suggesting that European countries may be more proactive in adopting sustainable production methods compared to non-European countries. This difference suggests that commitment to environmental protection and enforcement of regulations differs between the two regions. Prioritization of energy efficiency practices showed the largest differences with p -values of 0.001 in 2022 and 0.002 in 2023, indicating a consistent and significant gap between European and non-European countries. European countries appear to place a higher emphasis on energy efficiency, which could be due to their advanced regulatory frameworks and higher levels of adoption of technologies to reduce energy consumption.

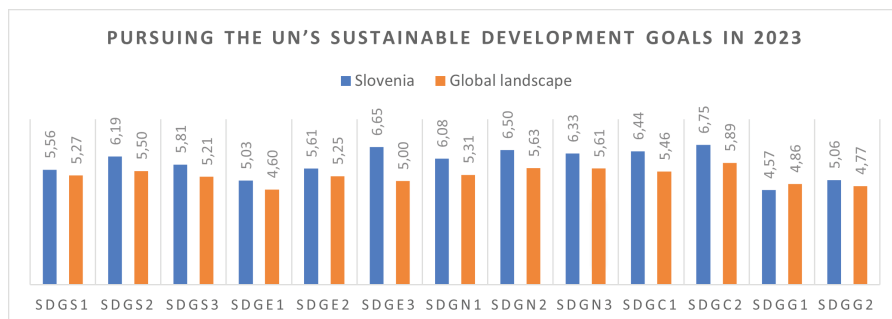
There were no significant differences in social responsibility and the integration of such principles into business activities in 2023 ($p=0.122$), which indicates a more uniform attitude towards corporate social responsibility worldwide. There were also no significant differences in the perception of tax payment as part of social responsibility and investors' general interest in socially responsible companies, indicating a broad recognition of these values across all regions.

These findings highlight an important insight into the different rates at which regions are adopting sustainable practices. European countries generally perform better in areas that have a direct impact on sustainability, such as environmental policies and support for the economic participation of minority groups. This could be due to a more stringent regulatory environment, greater public and business awareness, and possibly more extensive government support mechanisms. In contrast, the lower emphasis on these areas in non-European regions could be due to different economic priorities, stages of development or policy frameworks that do not prioritize or enforce sustainability standards in the same way. This analysis is important to understand where targeted efforts and international cooperation may be needed to address these inequalities. It suggests that while there is a global movement towards sustainability, there are significant regional differences that need to be bridged through policy adjustments, education and resource allocation to ensure a more unified global approach to sustainable development.

Having established a foundational understanding of the global landscape of sustainable development, we have moved on to a more detailed assessment with Figure 1. This figure shows the average values for the realization of the SDGs in Slovenia compared to the global averages for the year 2023. Such a comparison is important to assess Slovenia's position on the global stage related to sustainability efforts. We then took a closer look at the regional dynamics using Figure 2. This subsequent analysis refines our perspective by presenting the average values of Slovenia's achievements in the field of sustainable development compared to European and non-European countries over the same period.

Figure 1

Pursuing the SDGs in Slovenia compared to the global landscape - average values, 2023



Slovenia outperforms the global average in almost every category related to the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the country performs better than the global average of 5.50 in fostering social responsibility within businesses (SDGS2) with 6.19 points (on a Likert scale from 0 to 10; 0=completely disagree, 10=completely agree) and 5.56 points in encouraging companies to prioritize social value over profit (SDGS1), compared to the global average of 5.27 points. Slovenia also performs significantly better than the global average of 5.00 in promoting economic opportunities for minority groups (SDGE3), with an impressive score of 6.64. Environmental awareness is another strong area, where Slovenia scores 6.08 in SDGN1 and 6.50 in SDGN2, well above the global averages of 5.31 and 5.63 respectively. Slovenia also stands out in the integration of sustainable practices into the national culture and entrepreneurial activities, scoring 6.44 in SDGC1 and 6.75 in SDGC2, well above the global averages of 5.46 and 5.89 respectively. However, the country lags behind in government support for sustainability-oriented companies (SDGG1), scoring only 4.57, which is below the global average of 4.86. This gap highlights a crucial area for policy enhancement to better align governmental support with Slovenia's otherwise strong performance in sustainable development.

Figure 2

Pursuing the SDGs in Slovenia compared to the European and Non-European countries - average values, 2023

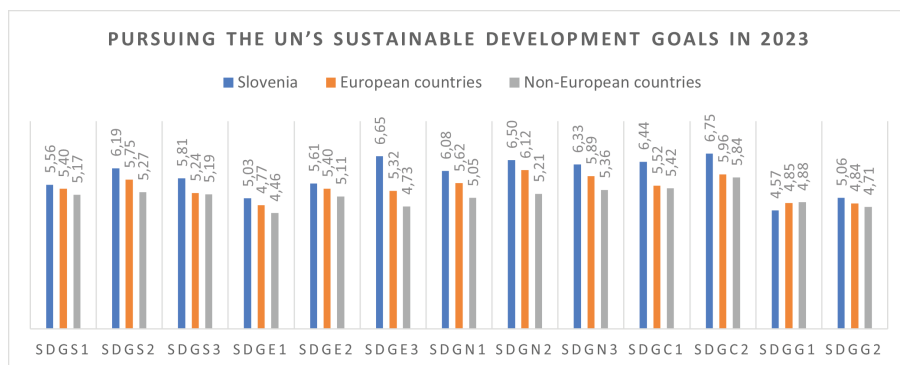


Figure 2 shows that Slovenia not only leads the global landscape, but also performs better compared to the average European country in terms of its commitment to sustainable development across a wide range of indicators. Slovenia scored well in integrating social responsibility into business activities (SDGS2) and in creating economic opportunities for minority groups (SDGE3), where it exceeded both the European and non-European averages. The country also performed particularly well in areas related to environmental practices (SDGN1, SDGN2 and SDGN3), outperforming European countries and significantly outperforming non-European countries. In terms of the cultural importance of sustainability (SDGC1) and entrepreneurial activities related to the SDGs (SDGC2), Slovenia again ranked above both the European and non-European countries, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability as a core national value and in business initiatives. The data reveals a differentiated picture of government support for sustainability-oriented companies in the various regions. In Slovenia, the average score of 4.57 is below the European average of 4.85, and also below the non-European average of 4.88. This deterioration suggests that Slovenia needs to rethink and possibly improve its support mechanisms to better align with or exceed regional and global standards. In the area of tax incentives and special rights for sustainability-oriented companies (SDGG2), on the other hand, Slovenia performs better than the European average of 4.84 and the non-European average of 4.71, with an average score of 5.06. This indicates a particular strength of Slovenia's approach to fostering a favorable environment for sustainable businesses through fiscal measures. This contrasting scenario highlights both opportunities and challenges for Slovenia. While the country demonstrates commendable effectiveness in providing tax incentives, which are crucial for encouraging businesses to adopt

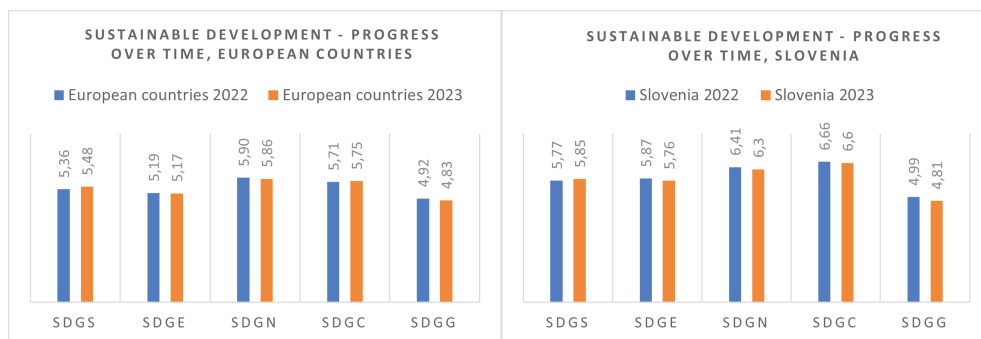
sustainable practices, it needs to address the gaps in broader government support to maintain the overall momentum towards sustainability. A more comprehensive support that goes beyond tax incentives could strengthen Slovenia's position as

a sustainability leader and ensure a balanced and robust support for companies that want to align with the SDGs.

Building on our understanding of Slovenia's position in sustainable development through regional comparisons, Figure 3 shifts our focus to temporal analysis. This figure shows the perceived progress of sustainable development and provides a perspective on the evolution of initiatives and outcomes. Through this time-lapse view, we can recognize the dynamic nature of sustainable development efforts and progress.

Figure 3

Perceived sustainable development progress – European countries and Slovenia



The results presented in Figure 3, articulated through a principal component analysis, provide a nuanced view of Slovenia's performance in the area of sustainable development during the specified period. This method, which ensures harmonized and weighted data, provides a robust multidimensional measure of Slovenia's performance.

In the area of social contribution and responsibility (SDGS), Slovenia's score increased from 5.77 to 5.85. This marginal improvement indicates that Slovenia is making progress in areas related to social impact and corporate responsibility. At the same time, the average score for European countries in this domain also increased from 5.36 to 5.48, indicating a common European trend towards improving social sustainability, with Slovenia's progress being slightly more pronounced. In terms of economic success (SDGE), Slovenia saw a slight decrease from 5.87 to 5.76, indicating challenges in the area of economic sustainability that may need to be addressed in order to be in line with long-term goals. In comparison, the European average dropped slightly from 5.19 to 5.17. Although the drop in Europe was smaller, it reflects the general economic pressures on the continent, with Slovenia being slightly more affected. In terms of good environmental practices (SDGN), Slovenia's score fell from 6.41 to 6.3. However, the European average also fell from 5.90 to 5.86, showing that environmental challenges are widespread and Slovenia is not alone in facing these hurdles, although its score remains above the European average, indicating a stronger performance in environmental stewardship. In the area of cultural support for sustainable development (SDGC), Slovenia has dropped from 6.66 to 6.6. Although this drop is

minor, it indicates that the cultural foundations of sustainability can still be improved. Compared to the European average, which slightly increased from 5.71 to 5.75, Slovenia demonstrates a greater commitment to cultural support for sustainability and maintains a lead despite the decline. Finally, in government support for sustainable business practices (SDGG), Slovenia's score fell from 4.99 to 4.81. This decline is notable and calls for a reassessment of government incentives and support mechanisms for sustainability-focused businesses. The European average also fell from 4.92 to 4.83, indicating that governments across Europe may be struggling with similar issues. The decline in Slovenia was comparable to the wider European trend, albeit from a higher starting point. In summary, while Slovenia is making commendable efforts in the social and environmental areas, the comparative analysis suggests that economic pressures and government support for sustainable businesses are areas that require attention. Despite some declines, Slovenia's overall scores are generally above the European average and scoring above 6, indicating a positive ranking and a strong commitment to sustainable development. However, the year-on-year declines require concerted efforts to not only reverse these trends but also regain the momentum needed to meet the ambitious SDGs.

5 Conclusion

This comprehensive study evaluates the integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into Slovenia's national framework, comparing it with European and global benchmarks. Utilizing the data from 2022 and 2023 gathered from 3,690 national experts across 43 countries, the research identifies significant progress in aligning business practices and policies with the SDGs, but also points to areas where improvement is needed. In several key areas, such as social contribution, social responsibility in business, satisfaction with economic performance and economic opportunities for minority groups, Slovenia frequently outperforms both the European and global average. However, the results also highlight areas that need attention, particularly in government support for sustainable business, which lags behind despite Slovenia's proactive stance on energy efficiency and other sustainable practices.

The study reveals clear differences between European and non-European countries, particularly in areas such as economic opportunities for minorities and environmental practices. European countries generally have more robust mechanisms to promote sustainability due to strict regulations and a stronger cultural emphasis on environmental protection and social equality. The most notable differences were observed in energy efficiency, where European countries outperformed their non-European counterparts by a statistically significant margin in both 2022 and 2023. This indicates a more aggressive adoption of energy saving measures and technologies in Europe. However, the lack of statistically significant differences in other areas suggests that the importance of sustainable practices is equally recognized across the region, but actual implementation varies widely. These variations highlight a potential misalignment

between the government policy and the operational needs of sustainability-oriented businesses.

Although Slovenia has made commendable progress in several aspects of sustainable development, a critical review and strengthening of the approach, particularly in the area of governance, is urgently needed. The findings call for a nuanced assessment of Slovenia's policies to ensure that they robustly support all facets of the SDGs. A reflective policy approach that goes beyond purely quantitative measures is essential to truly capture the nuances of each assessment area and ensure a comprehensive support for sustainable development. Fostering collaboration between the private sector, government and civil society is also essential to effectively address the comprehensive challenges of the SDGs. Slovenia's path to sustainable development should strike a balance between celebrating achievements and constructively focusing on areas that need further improvement. This balanced approach will not only support Slovenia's ongoing efforts, but also position the country as a leader in the field of sustainable development in the European context and beyond.

Dr. Katja Crnogaj, dr. Maja Rožman

Vrednotenje napredka pri doseganju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov: primerjalna analiza

Prispevek obravnava napredek pri uresničevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov (SDG) na nacionalni ravni, pri čemer se osredinjamo na Slovenijo in jo primerjamo z drugimi evropskimi državami ter globalnim okoljem. Raziskava uporablja podatke iz let 2022 in 2023, pridobljene z anketiranjem 3.690 nacionalnih strokovnjakov iz 43 držav. Glavni cilj je oceniti zaznani napredek na ključnih področjih trajnostnega razvoja, kot so: družbeni prispevek, družbena odgovornost, ekonomske priložnosti za ranljive skupine, okoljske prakse, energetska učinkovitost, nacionalne kulturne vrednote in vladna podpora podjetjem, usmerjenim v trajnostni razvoj. Leta 2015 so bili uvedeni cilji trajnostnega razvoja Združenih narodov (SDG), ki predstavljajo pomemben mejnik v globalnih prizadevanjih za spodbujanje blaginje in zaščito planeta. Teh 17 medsebojno povezanih ciljev obravnava ključne globalne izzive, kot so: revščina, neenakost, podnebne spremembe, degradacija okolja, mir in pravica. SDG so zasnovani kot načrt za boljše in bolj trajnostno prihodnost do leta 2030. V tem kontekstu so podjetništvo in vladne politike ključni dejavniki, ki vplivajo na doseganje teh ciljev. V prispevku se osredinjamo na oceno napredka pri vključevanju teh ciljev v slovenski nacionalni okvir in primerjavo z drugimi evropskimi državami ter globalnim okoljem, pri čemer se naslanjamo na podane ocene 3.690 nacionalnih strokovnjakov iz največje svetovne raziskave podjetništva Globalnega podjetniškega monitorja (GEM). Takšna primerjalna analiza je ključna, saj omogoča boljše razumevanje, kje Slovenija stoji v primerjavi z drugimi državami v smislu trajnostnega razvoja in kateri prakse so najučinkovitejše pri doseganju ciljev SDG. S tem lahko identificiramo

prednosti in slabosti slovenskega pristopa ter se učimo iz izkušenj drugih držav, kar omogoča oblikovanje boljših politik in strategij. Poleg tega taka analiza prispeva k boljšemu razumevanju globalnih trendov in izzivov, s katerimi se spoprijemajo države pri uresničevanju trajnostnih ciljev, kar je bistveno za usklajeno delovanje na mednarodni ravni. S sodelovanjem in z izmenjavo najboljših praks med državami lahko hitreje in učinkoviteje dosegamo globalne cilje trajnostnega razvoja, kar koristi ne le posameznim državam, ampak celotni mednarodni skupnosti. Raziskave, kot je ta, zagotavljajo tudi dragocene podatke, ki jih lahko uporabijo oblikovalci politik, podjetja in nevladne organizacije za spodbujanje trajnostnega razvoja ter prilagajanje svojih strategij ter operacij skladno z najboljšimi praksami.

Analizo dvanajstih ključnih področij trajnostnega razvoja smo opravili na osnovi kvantitativnih podatkov iz GEM, ki so bili pridobljeni z anketiranjem nacionalnih izvedencev (strokovnjakov). Ocena napredka vključuje, kako nova in rastoča podjetja ter širše poslovno in politično okolje prispevajo k ciljem trajnostnega razvoja. Področja, ki jih zajema raziskava, vključujejo: družbeni prispevek podjetij, družbeno odgovornost, zanimanje vlagateljev za socialno odgovorna podjetja, ekonomske priložnosti za manjšine, uporabo do okolja prijaznih praks, energetska učinkovitost, nacionalne kulturne vrednote glede trajnosti ter vladno podporo podjetjem, ki se osredinjajo na trajnost. Vsa področja so ocenjena na lestvici od 0 do 10, pri čemer višja ocena pomeni večjo usklajenost s SDG. Metode analize vključujejo primerjalno statistično analizo, oceno trendov ter neparametrične teste za primerjavo evropskih in neevropskih držav.

Izsledki raziskave kažejo na pomembne razlike med evropskimi in neevropskimi državami pri vključevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja v poslovne prakse. Evropske države na splošno kažejo boljšo uspešnost pri vključevanju okoljskih praks, kot sta energetska učinkovitost in zagotavljanje ekonomskih priložnosti za manjšinske skupine. To nakazuje, da so evropske države bolj proaktivne pri sprejemanju trajnostnih praks in da imajo predvsem razvitejša regulativna okvira za zaščito okolja. To omogoča podjetjem v evropskem prostoru lažji dostop do virov in podpore za implementacijo trajnostnih ukrepov. Evropske države prav tako pogosto izvajajo politike in iniciative, ki spodbujajo podjetja k sprejemanju okoljskih standardov, kar hkrati ustvarja konkurenčno prednost za trajnostno naravnana podjetja. Takšne politike ne le varujejo okolje, ampak tudi spodbujajo gospodarsko rast z ustvarjanjem novih delovnih mest v zelenih tehnologijah in inovacijah. Po drugi strani pa so trajnostne prakse v neevropskih državah manj razširjene, kar nakazuje na potrebo po večji podpori in izobraževanju na tem področju. Manj razširjena uporaba trajnostnih praks v neevropskih državah lahko izhaja iz različnih dejavnikov, vključno z gospodarskimi izzivi, s pomanjkanjem virov, kulturnimi razlikami in z manjšim pritiskom javnosti za varovanje okolja. V veliko neevropskih državah so podjetja mogoče bolj osredinjena na kratkoročno gospodarsko rast in preživetje, kar lahko vodi v zanemarjanje trajnostnih praks, ki se pogosto obravnavajo v kontekstu dodatnih stroškov. To poudarja potrebo po mednarodnem sodelovanju, (so)financiranju in tehnični pomoči, da bi spodbudili oziroma pospešili prehod k trajnostnemu poslovanju podjetij v teh državah. Poleg tega raziskava razkriva, da evropske države pogosteje implementirajo programe usposabljanja

in izobraževanja o trajnostnih praksah, kar omogoča podjetjem boljše razumevanje in izvajanje trajnostnih ukrepov. Vključevanje trajnostnih vrednot v izobraževalne programe na univerzah in v strokovnih šolah prispeva tudi k večji ozaveščenosti in sprejemanju trajnostnih praks med prihodnjimi generacijami poslovnih vodij. S tem se zagotavljata dolgoročna trajnost in konkurenčnost evropskega gospodarstva na globalnem trgu. Raziskava hkrati opozarja na pomembno vlogo vlad pri spodbujanju trajnostnega razvoja. Evropske vlade pogosto uvajajo politike, ki nagrajujejo trajnostna podjetja, na primer s subvencijami, z davčnimi olajšavami ali drugimi oblikami podpore. Takšne politike ustvarjajo ugodno okolje za trajnostne inovacije in prispevajo k hitrejšemu sprejemanju trajnostnih praks v celotnem gospodarstvu. V neevropskih državah pa je takšna podpora pogosto omejena, kar omejuje sposobnost podjetij, da se prilagodijo in sprejmejo trajnostne ukrepe.

Izsledki raziskave nakazujejo na potrebo po uravnoteženem pristopu k trajnostnemu razvoju, ki vključuje regulativne spodbude pa tudi izobraževanje in podporo za podjetja. Evropske izkušnje kažejo, da lahko kombinacija močne politične podpore, učinkovitega zakonodajnega okvira in izobraževanja vodi v uspešno vključevanje ciljev trajnostnega razvoja v poslovne prakse. Tak pristop bi bil lahko vzor za neevropske države, ki si prizadevajo za izboljšanje svoje trajnostne uspešnosti. Slovenija, kot je razvidno iz raziskave, na splošno presega globalno povprečje pri vključevanju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja. Država se še posebej izkazuje na področjih, kot je družbena odgovornost, na katerih podjetja dajejo prednost družbenemu prispevku pred tem, da bi samo ustvarjali dobiček. Slovenska podjetja se tudi v veliki meri posvečajo okoljskim vprašanjem, zlasti na področju energetske učinkovitosti, kar je skladno z evropskimi smernicami, vendar pa Slovenija zaostaja pri vladni podpori podjetjem, usmerjenim v trajnostni razvoj, kar predstavlja pomembno področje za izboljšave. Čeprav Slovenija kaže visoko okoljsko ozaveščenost in vključuje trajnostne prakse v nacionalno kulturo ter podjetniške aktivnosti, obstajajo izzivi pri zagotavljanju vladne podpore, kar bi lahko okrepilo njen položaj kot vodilne države na področju trajnostnega razvoja.

Raziskava poudarja pomembno vlogo podjetništva in vladne podpore pri doseganju ciljev trajnostnega razvoja. V Sloveniji, tako kot v drugih evropskih državah, je zaznati visoko stopnjo družbene odgovornosti v podjetniških praksah, čeprav ostajajo izzivi pri zagotavljanju enakih ekonomskih priložnosti za vse skupine prebivalstva, zlasti za manjšine, in pri zagotavljanju dosledne vladne podpore za trajnostno naravnana podjetja. To nakazuje, da je ključno, da Slovenija izboljša svoje strategije vladne podpore in zagotovi, da so te usklajene s potrebami podjetij, ki se osredinjajo na trajnost. Slovenija mora uravnotežiti svoje dosežke s konstruktivno kritiko področij, ki potrebujejo nadaljnje izboljšave. To vključuje predvsem krepitev sodelovanja med zasebnim sektorjem, vlado in civilno družbo za učinkovito naslavljanje celostnih izzivov ciljev trajnostnega razvoja. Krepitev politik, ki podpirajo trajnostna podjetja, in zagotavljanje, da so ta podjetja enakovredno podprta na vseh ravneh, bo ključnega pomena za nadaljnje izboljšave in premik k bolj trajnostnemu poslovanju ter trajnostnemu razvoju. Tak pristop bo ne le podpiral nadaljnjih prizadevanj Slovenije, ampak bo državo tudi postavil kot vodilno na področju trajnostnega razvoja v evropskem in

globalnem kontekstu. Poleg tega je trajnostni razvoj nenehen proces, ki zahteva stalno prilagajanje ter izboljšave politik in praks. S tem bo Slovenija zagotovila dobro osnovo za doseganje trajne konkurenčnosti in prispevala h globalnim prizadevanjem za trajnostno prihodnost.

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Dr. Katja Crnogaj, izredna profesorica na Ekonomsko-poslovni fakulteti Univerze v Mariboru
E-naslov: katja.crnogaj@um.si

Dr. Maja Rožman, docentka na Ekonomsko-poslovni fakulteti Univerze v Mariboru
E-naslov: maja.rozman1@um.si