Foreword

The Report on Equitable and Sustainable Well-Being, now in its eleventh edition, offers a multi-dimensional portrait of Italy, one that is faithful to and respectful of the country's wealth and complexity.

Whether you consult it for an overview of *how people live in Italy*, to study its dynamics over time or across the territory, understand progress, developments and setbacks, or steer political decisions and interventions, the Bes Report and its lavish statistical documentation are the mature expression of an operational vision, on top of that refined and evolved from a theoretical and methodological viewpoint, of sustainability, in its environmental, economic, social, and cultural pillars.

The 12 essential domains, which have represented the reference picture since 2013, and the 152 indicators proposed in this edition, provide readers with a multiplicity of significant features of the events that concern our country, with an unchanged focus on the people who inhabit it, their needs, new and old resources and opportunities they can access, the changes they have gained or suffered, the inequalities they seek to free themselves from, their moods and future prospects.

Each domain is thus a window onto our present and a narration of collective tales, placed in their complex context while also crossed by major international processes.

How do people live, in Italy? For more than half of the indicators, data are disaggregated by gender. Even today, the trend describes women's disadvantaged condition, especially in the labour market, economic well-being, and presence in decision-making bodies.

This year, moreover, the Report has a special focus on inequalities by educational level, one of the most important determinants of well-being[1]. A higher educational level is reflected by an advantage in all economic, social and cultural indicators, the protection being particularly conspicuous with regard to the several indicators of economic distress. Among university graduates, in fact, only 0.6 percent live in conditions of severe material and social deprivation, whereas the percentage rises to 7.5 percent among those who have at the most a lower secondary school (8th grade) diploma. The incidence of absolute poverty decreases the higher the educational qualification: it is equal to 13.6 percent among those who have at the most a lower secondary school diploma and falls to 2.2 percent for those who have obtained a tertiary education qualification. Furthermore, among those with a lower educational qualification, more than one person in four is at risk of income poverty (25.8 percent compared to 8.7 percent among those with a higher educational qualification).

The phenomena and processes described by the rich statistical documentation on well-being made available through the Report sketch a thoroughly accurate and concrete map of policy needs expressed by the country.

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1   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD. 2023. *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en.

Despite the timely updating of indicators (which refer to 2023 in more than half of the cases), available databases still do not allow us to fully appreciate the impacts of the huge investments deployed for the post-pandemic crisis recovery. In particular, the unfolding of the social consequences of such effects calls for a longer observation period. Istat's commitment is to provide, through the evolution of well-being, elements that help monitor even in coming years the results of the wide range of measures targeted by the missions of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). To this end, in September 2022 the Institute issued an experimental dashboard[2] integrated with Bes and SDGs indicators and PNRR investments, and is working on expanding the set of indicators and the reorganisation of their informational content.

Equity, a central issue in the Bes measurement system, is also particularly significant for the PNRR monitoring, one of the transversal priorities of which is the reduction of gender, generational and territorial gaps.

Among the possible fields of analyses of inequalities in well-being, the territorial one is particularly important in our country, and the Bes system makes it possible to measure territorial discrepancies up to the regional level for 144 out of 152 indicators. Many well-being indicators have a significant function in the policy-making cycle and in the public policy monitoring processes. Armed with this awareness, Istat has also been committed for years to producing Bes indicators at local level[3], and in 2023 it launched the BesT project, with the aim of enhancing the informational offer at least at a provincial level with new measures, new methodologies and new analyses. In the first quarter of 2023, the first edition of the 20 regional BesT 2023 Reports was released.

Bridging territorial gaps is one of the transversal priorities of the PNRR, and Official Statistics is called upon to play an essential role in monitoring the trend of territorial convergence policies and their impact on the well-being of citizens; even the Statistical Information Steering and Coordination Committee (Comstat), in its guidelines on Official Statistics planning, hopes for greater attention to the measurement of inequalities[4]. This knowledge is the essential prerequisite to build targeted and effective intervention tools and thereby enable stable and sustainable conditions of well-being for all citizens.

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2   Cf. https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/289797 (in Italian).
3   They consist of 70 sub-regional measures that are consistent and integrated with the Bes framework. For more information, see https://www.istat.it/en/statistical-themes/focus/well-being-and-sustainability/the-measurement-of-well-being/bes-at-local-level/.
4   Cf. Comstat, *Linee di indirizzo per il Psn 2023-2025*. https://www.sistan.it/fileadmin/Repository/Home/PSN/Programma_statistico_nazionale/Psn_2023-2025/Linee_di_indirizzo_Psn_2023-2025.pdf (in Italian).