

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The third pan-European state of the environment report

This report, prepared by the European Environment Agency (EEA) for the environment ministers' conference in Kiev in May 2003, is the third pan-European state of the environment report in the context of the Environmental Programme for Europe, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The main aim of the report is to provide an overview of progress in the Environmental Programme for Europe. Unlike the previous reports, it covers Europe, the whole of the Russian Federation, and the Caucasian and central Asian countries, in other words the full geographical area of the 'Environment for Europe' political process.

This third assessment also differs in scope from the previous reports by taking a more integrated approach, both on environmental issues (e.g. environment and health, or combining inland and marine waters) and on the inclusion of environmental concerns in sectoral policies, reflecting policy developments in these areas. Indicator-based data were used to provide a picture of the environmental changes which are occurring in the main regions of Europe, highlighting those associated with the transition to market economies. The information on trends, although incomplete, clearly shows the areas where achievement of environmental targets is likely to present the greatest future challenge.

The development of state of the environment reports, including indicators, in support of the Environment for Europe process shows a simultaneous improvement in coordinating and harmonising the provision of information for policy-making at the pan-European level. The intention with this third report was to develop it as a fully fledged indicator-based assessment. However, limitations of data availability and comparability still pose problems for the development and use of indicators. Chapter 14 on information gaps and needs and Annex 1 country tables address these. A flexible approach was therefore adopted to enable coverage of all the relevant issues across the whole of the area studied.

The Kiev ministerial conference follows on from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Although the current report focuses on the environmental aspect of sustainable development, it still tries to make connections from the other issues regarding sustainable development to their implementation in Europe. The main focus of the report is, however, to analyse past and current progress in the Environment for Europe process. Hence the reader can find in this report:

- Eight chapters on developments in sectors such as agriculture and transport which assess progress in implementing the ministerial intentions of improving the integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies.
- Ten chapters on environmental issues, which focus on the implementation of the international conventions. These chapters answer the general question of progress since the ministers first met in Dobris castle.
- A final assessment chapter on the successes and challenges in the implementation of specific instruments suggested at the various ministerial meetings.
- A chapter on information gaps and needs.
- Annexes giving statistics by country which could not be shown in the aggregated indicators in the report and providing international comparisons.

## 1.2. Key policy developments

Since the first ministerial conference 'Environment for Europe', held in Dobris castle in 1991, there has been much progress in pan-European cooperation to protect the environment. A large number of international conventions have been ratified, a process to continue at the Kiev conference where legislation on environmental impact assessment, civil liability and pollution registers is on the agenda. Annex 2 gives the state of play of signing and ratification of multilateral environmental agreements by countries.

In western Europe, the main policy lines are being set out by the European Union (EU)

which is developing an interlinked set of policies. These are the sixth environment action programme (6EAP) encompassing the period up to 2010, the Cardiff process for the integration of the environment into other policies and the EU sustainable development strategy. These policies will provide the frame for detailed strategies and actions to enhance sustainable development within the EU, including the external dimensions of those policies.

In central Europe, accession to the EU dominates the agenda in many countries. The requirements of adjusting national legislation to EU requirements, and the large implied investments, raise issues of timing and provide an opportunity to prioritise other (environmental) measures that enhance sustainable development.

In the 12 countries of eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia (EECCA), environmental problems are often on a different scale from those in western Europe, while the financial situation is much worse. Cooperation between countries is less developed, although a start has been made in developing a common sustainable development strategy for the Kiev conference.

The report shows developments in each of these three regions against the policy background sketched above. Furthermore, the outcomes of the Johannesburg summit show that there are common links connecting countries and issues. Management of basic resources such as energy and water requires an effort in the whole of Europe, as does the approach to managing the risks of producing and using more and more chemicals. Trade and environment issues vis-à-vis the rest of the world are also of common concern, along with sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Although much of what will happen over the next 30 years will be the result of policy decisions and actions taken during recent decades, new decision-making also has a vital role to play in shaping the future. Given the uncertainties in extrapolating current trends, today's decision-makers can only get a clearer picture of what tomorrow might bring by exploring different future scenarios. In this way, they can assess the likely impacts of their decisions and determine more accurately what they can do to create a more desirable future. Scenarios do not predict, rather they paint pictures of possible futures;

they can be used to explore what might happen if basic assumptions are changed (see UNEP *Global environment outlook 3*, 2002: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo3/>). However, due to limitations of time and resources, this report does not contain an outlook section covering possible future trends.

### 1.3. Towards a more integrated monitoring and reporting process

One of the most important achievements of the 1998 Aarhus ministerial conference was the adoption of the convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (the Aarhus convention). Through seeking to guarantee public rights to information, participation and access to justice in the environmental sphere, its goal is to contribute to the protection of the right of every person of this and future generations to live in an environment adequate for his or her health and well-being. Among its obligations, the convention requires all signatories to make available their environmental information to the public and includes an obligation to produce a comprehensive overview of the state of the environment every four years. This aspect of the Aarhus convention will form the legal background for improving and strengthening capacities for national environmental monitoring and reporting (for details, see Chapter 14, Box 14.2). This report and eventual follow-up studies may become a catalyst for improved information and data flows at the national and the pan-European levels.

The need for more coordinated cooperation in this area was emphasised at a conference on environmental monitoring organised by the Russian Federation in Moscow in January 2001. All countries decided, in order to ensure their contribution to information gathering at the European level, to create the UNECE ad hoc working group on environmental monitoring (WGEM). Taking into account the positive experience of the Agency's European environment information and observation network (Eionet), WGEM was given the mandate to investigate possible improvements in monitoring, data exchange and reporting especially in the EECCA countries. To help carry out this task, the working group decided to take the production of the Kiev report as the main test case in order to come

up with concrete and documented recommendations for monitoring and reporting in European countries to be addressed by the Kiev ministerial conference.

WGEM has fulfilled the indispensable function of guiding the data collection for the Kiev report in countries that are not members of the EEA. WGEM discussed the guidelines for data collection and the draft questionnaires, and its members functioned as national contact points (NCPs) during the data collection exercise. Support to the countries for data collection was part of EU CARDS (regional environment reconstruction programme for the Balkans) funding for the Balkan countries (Albania and Serbia and Montenegro not included) and EU Tacis (technical assistance programme for countries in transition) funding for the EECCA countries.

During this data collection phase, the NCPs had to cope with working with other institutes holding the data in their countries, which in some cases revealed practical difficulties in access to information. Due to the absence of bilateral funding in general, a number of in-depth discussions on detailed monitoring of waste, chemicals and air pollution could not be finished before the conference, but will continue until the end of 2003. Specific funding is now in place from the European Commission to build network and information capacities in EECCA countries and provides a stepping stone towards a more stable infrastructure for long-term building on the achievements of the Kiev report. The lessons from EIONET developments over the past decade or so show that many years of concentrated effort and funding will be needed to ensure sustainable improvements in the provision of environmental information at the pan-European level.

Providing the basis for a phase of 'learning from lessons', the report marks the start of a period of renewed cooperation in environmental monitoring and reporting in Europe. From the start, WGEM involved itself in articulating the contents of the report to make it relevant to policies and to include the proper analyses. Subsequently, WGEM involved itself in the necessary data flows and information processing. Such an activity is important for establishing an effective bridge between a responsive monitoring system and a relevant reporting process in support of policy-making. The

need to harmonise these processes at the pan-European level appears to be increasing.

During 2002 and 2003, the 13 accession countries to the EU joined the EEA as full members. In December 2002, the Council of the European Union decided to approve the accession of 10 of these countries to the EU as from 1 May 2004. The Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, and somewhat later the Republic of Moldova, will be at the eastern border of the enlarged EU. After the accession of Turkey, for which no date has yet been set, the Caucasian countries would also be bordering the EU. Cooperation between the EU and the Balkan countries is well under way, with many reconstruction projects being implemented for recovering from the damage of war.

Knowledge of developments in the whole of the European continent will thus be increasingly necessary for supporting policy processes with environmental information. For the future, a higher level of investment is needed in streamlining monitoring and providing a basic environmental monitoring infrastructure (measuring equipment, data processing and exchange facilities, and publishing) particularly in EECCA. On the international level, continuation of a framework for cooperation between countries, as has been provided by WGEM to the present report, will be necessary, so as to improve the information base for regular indicator-based assessments. Those elements are documented in the official UNECE-WGEM paper 'Lessons learned from the third assessment data collection' for discussion at the Kiev conference (see also Chapter 14 on information gaps and needs).

To this end, the European Commission entrusted the EEA with the Tacis-funded project mentioned above, aimed at strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in the 12 countries of eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia. The long-term objective of the project, up to and beyond the Kiev conference, is to help integrate EECCA environmental information and management systems into the mainstream of European practice, and thus help countries to create sound conditions for economic transition.

One short-term objective of the project is to strengthen environmental information and observation capacity and networks in order to provide good, reliable and relevant information on the state of the environment

in EECCA as a basis for improved policy-making and public awareness. Another short-term objective is to enhance cooperation between existing environmental networks.

The project is expected to provide results beyond the Kiev conference in order to ensure a good follow-up. For that purpose, the key objectives of the project are:

- to support the preparation of the third assessment report as an urgent action;
- to strengthen the network of NCPs involved in the preparation of the third assessment report and start to build networks of national specialised institutes in EECCA extending the existing networks in western and central Europe;
- to support and extend the activities of WGEM in providing results for the Kiev conference and to support post-Kiev follow-up activities;
- to carry out general supporting activities for all the above tasks.

#### 1.4. Presentation of the indicators

The assessments in this report are based on indicators that cover the most important aspects of the socio-economic and environmental framework (driving forces, pressures, state of the environment, impacts and societal responses, the so-called DPSIR assessment framework including eco-efficiency indicators). Analysis of the indicators can be found in detailed fact

sheets on the EEA’s web site. The indicators presented in this report illustrate the most important trends in each policy domain. To the extent feasible, ‘smiley faces’ indicate progress, or lack of it, for key indicators.

The smiley faces in the boxes next to key indicators aim to give a concise assessment of the indicator:

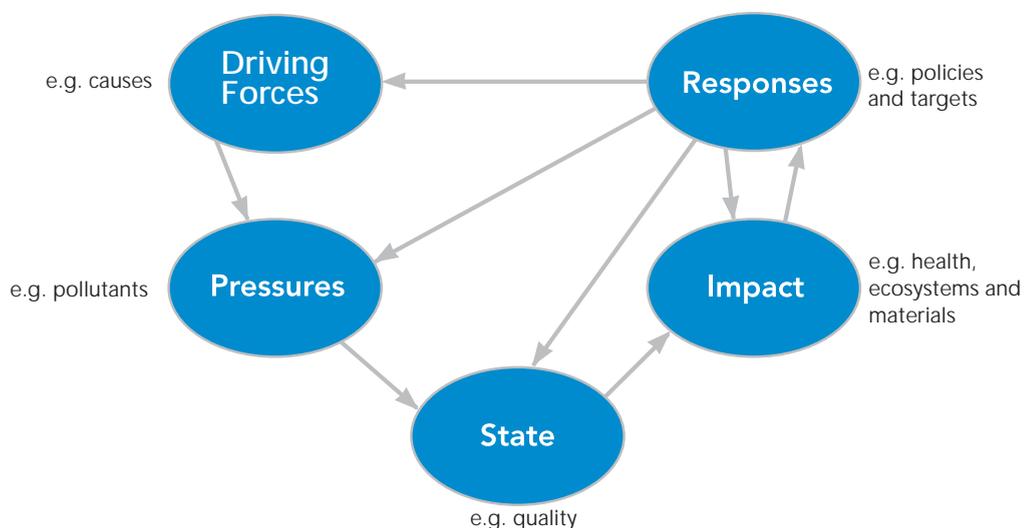
- 😊 positive trend, moving towards qualitative objectives or quantified targets;
- 😐 some positive development, but either insufficient to reach qualitative objectives or quantified targets, or mixed trends within the indicator;
- 😞 unfavourable trend.

Unless explicitly stated, the assessment is based on the entire period covered by the report.

Within the DPSIR framework, indicators are presented in a standard format. Firstly, at an international level, totals are shown for the main regions of Europe. This is particularly relevant where there are international agreements on actions to tackle continental or global problems (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions). Secondly, where possible and relevant, subregional and national breakdowns are provided to highlight the differences between regions and countries.

DPSIR assessment framework

Figure 1.1.



Source: EEA

**Box 1.1. Country groupings used in this report**

Compared with the earlier reports, geographical coverage has expanded to cover the whole of the Russian Federation, Caucasus and central Asia. In any report of this type with such a huge geographical scope, it is necessary to group countries together and draw generalised conclusions. For practical reasons the groups used are based on established political groupings rather than environmental considerations, and there can be large variations in environmental performance within the groups and substantial overlaps between

them. Where possible this has been highlighted in the report.

Even though the geographical scope now includes large areas of Asia, 'Europe' is still used to denote the total area studied reflecting the framework within which the report has been developed.

The main and most-used grouping divides Europe in three parts:

Western Europe (WE)	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (EU-15); Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland (EFTA); including the small states Andorra, Monaco, San Marino
Central and eastern Europe (CEE)	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey
Twelve countries of eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia (EECCA)	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

In some cases it is relevant to divide central and eastern Europe in two and make a regional subdivision in EECCA:

Western Europe	As above
EU accession countries (AC-13)	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey
Russian Federation and the western EECCA	Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine
Balkan countries	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro
Caucasian countries	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia
Central Asian countries	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan