



Austrian State of Environment Report

Georg Rebernig, CEO, Environment Agency Austria

Overview

- SoER & other Environmental Evaluation Reports
- Legal Basis & Mandate for Austrian SoER
- SoER Reporting by EAA
- Process & Structure
- Key findings of the 11th Austrian SoER
- Communication
- Conclusions

SoER & other Environmental Evaluation Reports

SoER – at national level top level report within a hierarchy of sector / media specific evaluation reports:

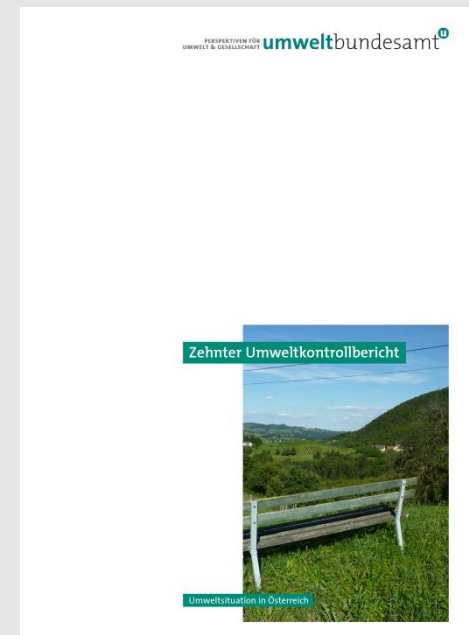
- Water, Air, Waste, Biodiv., Climate, Chemicals, Contaminated Sites, ...
- Each sector reporting system also structured in a hierarchical / functional way: emissions – environmental quality // mitigation – adaptation // implementation reports on specific pieces of legislation // often triggered and guided by reporting obligations (national / EU / multilateral environmental agreements)

Other Evaluation Reports: EU Environmental Implementation Review Country Report, OECD Country Performance Report, Country Chapters in EEA SoER,...

Legal Basis & Mandate for the Austrian SoER

Environmental Control Act 1985:

- obliges Environment Minister to report on the state of the environment every 3 years
- with a view to the protection of the environment in its entirety, good and improved living conditions...: (a) to determine status and development of the environment and impact factors (b) to assess these findings (c) to make report public
- tasks the Environment Agency Austria to do this work on behalf of the Minister



SoE-Reporting by Environment Agency Austria

- Environment Agency Austria established by "Environmental Control Act" in 1985
- "State-of-the-Environment"-kind of Agency (not implementing)
- Public Institution, largest Austrian environmental expert institution
- Other important assessment reports are being prepared by other expert institutions in Austria: Forests, Water, Mobility, Climate Change, Industrial Emissions, Regional Planning, Energy, ...
- Agency produces SoER within an expert institution's network: Governments of federal provinces, Statistics Austria, Energy Agency Austria, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management; National Reference Centres of EEA-EIONET all within Umweltbundesamt (except biocides: Austrian Health Agency)

SoER-drafting process

4 phases in a 3 years life-cycle

- **I. „Storming“ Phase:**
 - Stock taking of previous cycle & screening of relevant topics
 - Delegation of Responsibilities & Project Team
- **II. „Forming“ Phase**
 - Concept for thematic issues
 - First Quality Assurance Sessions Inhouse
- **III. Performing Phase**
 - 1. Drafting Phase
 - 1. External Consultation (three cycles) & Revision (Sideletter)
 - 2. Draft
 - Final consultation & quality assurance
 - Production, Publication & Distribution
- **IV. Transitional Phase**
 - Performing Lessons Learned
 - Balancing of Resources & Budget Planning next cycle

Austrian SOER – Structure

- **Environmental Targets** (international, EU, national); if necessary comments on inappropriate targets
 - **Situation & Trends** (status quo, past three years, forecasts)
 - **Analysis** (status of compliance with targets, reasons for deviation)
 - **Targeted Recommendations** (measures proposed; to European Commission, Federal Government, Federal Provinces)
- one pattern for the internal structure of all chapters ensures **continuity** & allows **comparability**
- Interlinkages between thematic issues are made visible



SoER – Key findings

11th SoER – 17 thematic issues

- Energy
- Industrial Plants
- Mobility
- Agriculture & Forestry
- Water
- Land use & Soil Protection
- Biological diversity and nature protection
- Air
- Environment & Health
- Climate protection
- Climate change adaptation
- Resource and Waste Management
- Contaminated Sites
- Chemicals
- Environmental effects of spatial development
- Green Economy
- Sustainable Development

Key findings

- Growing **demand for natural resources** threatens sustainable economy and social cohesion. To reduce impacts on the environment and to minimize dependency on imports of goods, **resource efficiency** has to improve further. An **internalisation of external cost** has to be implemented. **Green Economy** needs to be strengthened by abolition of environmentally counterproductive subsidies, introduction of eco-social tax reform to achieve a transformation towards a sustainable economy.
- Despite measures in place and improvements taking place **mobility remains in Austria as a main source of pressure on the environment** in terms of noise and emissions-**Decarbonization** has to be introduced by legal and fiscal measures.

Key findings

- **Substantial improvements** over decades **in the field of water/water management** concerning water quality, aquatic ecology and flood management – still deficits in **morphology of water bodies** – therefore **financial measures** have to be prolonged. Further Challenges ahead: conserving flood plains, land use planning measures, mobile flood / object protection, landslides, designation of areas with a discrepancy between water supply/demand.
- Fertile soil is a scarce resource in Austria, **soil sealing at its high level remains a problem** although showing a slow decrease. Despite constant loss of soil, remaining fertile soil shows increase in humus content. Data gaps on soil quality remain – National soil monitoring is needed. **Transformation to a sustainable soil use.**

Key findings

- Since 2010 tendency of decreasing gross domestic energy consumption while increasing share of **renewable energies** (33%) in Austria- in industry renewables are already the second most important energy source.
- Still additional measures are needed to increase **energy efficiency** (2014 the Austrian target was not yet reached), to reduce energy demand and GHG emissions in order to reach european and national energy- and climate targets also in 2020 and 2030.
- **Air quality has improved but still remains as the most important environmental pressure on human health.** Exposures to air pollutants NO_x, ozon, particulate matter and benzo(a)pyrene have to be reduced – measures have to be implemented regarding transport, agriculture, industry, energy production, small combustion plants.

Key findings

- **Nature protection measures are in place**, almost 1/3 of Austria is covered by at least one conservation regime, measures to manage invasive species are intensified – but **80% of species and habitats are in an unfavourable status** - Threats like hydrological alterations, abandoned favourable agricultural practices or fragmentation have to be reduced by **implementing measures according to the Austrian biodiversity strategy**. Invasive species show an increase therefore management measures were intensified.

Key findings

- Compared to the global mean temperature increase, the **Austrian mean temperature increase** is twice as high with an further increase predicted. Adaptation to climate change challenges Austrias communities – planning and actions across community boundaries are necessary. The Austrian strategy on climate change adaptation is in place but **further adaptation activities are needed**.
- Despite **decreasing GHG-emission** the measures in place will not be sufficient to meet long-term european and national targets. **Additional sectoral measures** for energy, industry, traffic agriculture and buildings as well as fiscal measures (CO₂-fees) are required.
- **Growing urbanization** causes many environmental impacts like increasing emissions from traffic, loss of green spaces. **Spatial Planning considering energy issues** needs to be employed.

A photograph of a conference room. A long, polished wooden table is set up with several microphones on stands, each with a black foam windscreen. The room is brightly lit, and the background is slightly blurred, showing more of the conference room and some people seated at the table.

SoER Communication

Communication Activities

Media Communication

- Press Conference for Presentation of SoER 2013 with Nikolaus Berlakovich, (former) Austrian Minister for the Environment & Georg Rebernik, CEO Environment Agency Austria
- Press Release
http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/news_130619/
- Interviews with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF and other media
- Launch of the SoER via Website
<http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/ukb/>
- SoER as background information for journalists during election campaign 2013

Communication Activities

Stakeholder Communication

- 500 printed examples for 500 defined addressees (politicians, decision makers in administration, stakeholder, interest groups,...)
- Austrian Parliament: Presentation by Austrian Environment Agency to the Environmental Committee
- Bilateral meetings with members of Austrian government, national assembly, different interest groups (NGOs, Industry,)
- Stakeholder Event in 2015 in context of presentation of European SoER (200 participants)



SoER in the Context of Evaluation

SoER in the Context of Evaluation

- SoER plays important role in policy evaluation; acknowledged by legislative framework
- Exercise of „Environmental Implementation Review – Country Reports“ (performed by EC) shows central role of Evaluation Reporting (though EIR approach does not yet seem fully developed)
- SoER is part of the policy process → it is strongly influenced by policy process logics; e.g. communication of results, stakeholder dialogue, pressure,...
- Appropriate indicators: physical environment is the target; big differences in finding / measuring appropriate indicators (e.g. emission reduction vs. effects of adaptation policies)
- Challenge: relation with evaluation exercises of other policy areas – how to integrate?

Contact & Information

Mag. Georg Rebernic

Geschäftsführer/CEO

Umweltbundesamt GmbH/Environment Agency Austria

Spittelauer Lände 5

1090 Vienna/Austria

Tel.: +43-(0)1-31304

georg.rebernic@umweltbundesamt.at

Umweltbundesamt
www.umweltbundesamt.at

European Environmental Evaluators Network
Copenhagen ■ 15.–16.9.2016