

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twentieth-third session

Geneva, 14–17 November 2017

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Environmental performance reviews

Information paper No. 3

7 November 2017

Third Environmental Performance Review of Albania: recommendations

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

The present document provides recommendations of the third Environmental Performance Review of Albania agreed by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews at its meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 23 to 27 October 2017.

The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to adopt these recommendations.

* This document was not formally edited.

Chapter 1: Legal, policy and institutional framework

Recommendation 1.1:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

- (a) Prioritize the development and adoption of subsidiary legislation;
- (b) Ensure that law enforcement reports are prepared when required by legislation.

Recommendation 1.2:

The Government should gradually move towards applying the fully fledged Regulatory Impact Assessment tool for laws and subsidiary legislation.

Recommendation 1.3:

The Government should further improve the quality of strategic planning, and in particular ensure:

- (a) Timely preparation and adoption of strategic documents;
- (b) Regular preparation of implementation reports;
- (c) Online accessibility of information on the Integrated Planning System, National Strategies for Development and Integration (NSDIs), sectoral and cross-cutting strategies and implementation reports on all of the foregoing.

Recommendation 1.4:

The Government should strengthen strategic planning in the environmental field by the timely development and adoption of a cross-cutting environmental strategy for the next (post-NSDI-II) planning period.

Recommendation 1.5:

The Government should ensure:

- (a) That all documents subject to strategic environmental assessment (SEA) undergo an SEA;
- (b) The observance by the proposing authorities of all stages and requirements of the SEA process, including monitoring and follow-up;
- (c) Opportunities to bring in broader expertise for evaluation of environmental effects when needed.

Recommendation 1.6:

The Government should:

- (a) Strengthen the Policy Development and Strategic Planning Unit within the Department of Development Programming, Financing and Foreign Aid in the Prime Minister's Office and formalize its coordination role on the SDGs;
- (b) Identify the political body to guide efforts to achieve the SDGs and the monitoring of progress towards them;
- (c) Proceed with the preparation of the national plan on SDGs and the setting up of aspirational and measurable national targets, including interim targets until 2020 and 2025;
- (d) Ensure the preparation of reports monitoring progress towards the achievement of the SDGs;
- (e) Ensure that the SDGs are integrated into future planning documents;
- (f) Raise awareness of the SDGs among local government authorities, civil society, academia and the private sector in order to involve them in efforts towards attaining the SDGs, and ensure public participation in such efforts.

Recommendation 1.7:

The State Inspectorate of Environment and Forestry should:

- (a) Intensify efforts to apply a risk-analysis-based approach to inspection planning through provision of guidance materials and training;

- (b) Endorse checklists for type A and B environmental permit inspections and for hospital waste management;
- (c) Ensure regular publication of compliance and enforcement data;
- (d) Operate a website to increase the transparency of its activities and to stimulate the engagement of the public in the detection of violations;
- (e) Initiate, step by step, compliance promotion activities;
- (f) Strengthen its coordination with the State Water Inspectorate and with the environmental inspectors of municipalities by initiating communication protocols or cooperation agreements.

Recommendation 1.8:

The Government should:

- (a) Intensify efforts to assist municipalities in the implementation of their environment-related functions;
- (b) Assist municipalities in drafting environment-related plans required by legislation.

Recommendation 1.9:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should establish a training system, including for in-service training, for staff in the Ministry and subordinated institutions to ensure regular and comprehensive coverage of environmental and sustainable development issues.

Recommendation 1.10:

The Government should establish training schemes, including for in-service training, for civil servants in sectoral ministries on environmental issues.

Chapter 2: Greening the economy

Recommendation 2.1:

The Government should continue to stimulate domestic demand through ensuring a positive direct fiscal framework for businesses and citizens and by favouring sectoral initiatives to induce sound economic growth, which may ease access to loans and finance for private companies and entrepreneurs operating in economic sectors more likely to contribute to a shift to a green economy.

Recommendation 2.2:

The Ministry of Finance and Economy should continue the process of fiscal decentralization by issuing appropriate legislation and accompanying measures as a way to achieve significant progress in performance of the public utilities managed at the level of local government units.

Recommendation 2.3:

The Institute of Statistics should develop:

- (a) A statistical information system for environmental expenditures based on the existing international standard, i.e., the Classification of Environmental Protection Activities and Expenditures (CEPA);
- (b) Statistics for the measurement of indicators designed to measure progress made towards the greening of economic growth.

Recommendation 2.4:

The Government should support the new local government units and the service providers to increase resource-efficiency, especially in the waste and water services, and develop appropriate strategies to concentrate public and private investment, particularly from international donors, on infrastructure and plants that can create the basic conditions for a cost-effective service provision.

Recommendation 2.5:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment, through the National Agency for Protected Areas, and the Ministry of Finance and Economy should continue their efforts to develop and

implement a tourism strategy, especially in high-value natural areas and particularly protected sites, by promoting sustainable forms of tourism.

See Recommendation 9.1.

Recommendation 2.6:

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy should continue in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment with legislative efforts and the development of organizational innovations towards energy market liberalization, particularly with regard to renewable energy sources, by means of advanced, indirect incentivizing mechanisms (such as the sliding feed-in premiums) that support resource-efficiency and innovation without burdening the public budget.

Recommendation 2.7:

The Government should establish financial mechanisms to support environmental protection activities, such as an environmental fund under the ministry responsible for environment as prescribed in the 2011 Law on Environmental Protection.

Chapter 3: Environmental monitoring, information, public participation and education

Recommendation 3.1:

The Government should:

- (a) Substantially increase financial resources for environmental monitoring in order to fully implement the annual national environmental monitoring programme, with a view to complying with the requirements of the European Union environmental acquis;
- (b) Continue investment in the National Reference Laboratory at the National Environment Agency to gain accreditation for an increased number of parameters that are being monitored.

Recommendation 3.2:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

- (a) Develop mechanisms to improve coordination between those responsible for environmental monitoring and increase their efficiency;
- (b) Ensure the functioning of the integrated environmental management system (IEMS) with connected databases;
- (c) Through IEMS, improve access to information, especially regarding air quality data, and make near-real-time data available to the public.

Recommendation 3.3:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment, through the National Environment Agency, should strengthen the existing state-of-environment reporting by:

- (a) Using the Driver–Pressure–State–Impact–Response (DPSIR) framework in order to be more connected with policy needs;
- (b) Complementing the current annual indicator-based reporting with a more comprehensive state-of-environment report every three to four years;
- (c) Including an executive summary in the state-of-environment report to better inform stakeholders and decision makers.

Recommendation 3.4:

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

- (a) Establish a dedicated provision within the budget for and develop a regular programme to support the integration of environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) into the curriculum, with associated learning standards;

(b) Improve teacher training on EE and ESD and the development of learning resources for EE and ESD across all levels of schooling;

(c) Nominate a national focal point and participate in the activities under the ECE Strategy for ESD.

Chapter 4: Implementation of international agreements and commitments

Recommendation 4.1:

The Government should:

(a) Undertake an in-depth analysis of the administrative and technical capacity and financial needs of the bodies and units charged with the implementation of the obligations deriving from global and regional environmental agreements;

(b) On this basis, prepare an action plan to ensure that the adequate administrative and technical capacity and financial resources are secured for implementation of the obligations deriving from global and regional environmental agreements;

(c) Establish a publicly accessible, up-to-date system for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environment-related projects.

Recommendation 4.2:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

(a) Ensure access through its website to the texts of global, regional and bilateral environmental agreements, including translations into the national language;

(b) Make the information on the status of the participation of Albania in global, regional and bilateral agreements and on the implementation of those agreements (in particular, national reports on implementation) available to the public through its website;

(c) Increase the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the preparation of national reports on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs);

(d) Further involve NGOs in the decision-making processes regarding participation in MEAs and the implementation of MEAs, namely by integrating them in coordination groups dealing with international matters and ensuring their effective consultation.

Recommendation 4.3:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

(a) Promote the ratification of the Protocol on Heavy Metals and the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and their amendments;

(b) Facilitate the conclusion of the ratification process for the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone;

(c) Undertake a cost-benefit analysis for the ratification of the amendments to the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone;

(d) Facilitate the conclusion of the ratification process for the Minamata Convention on Mercury;

(e) Engage actively in the intersessional process to develop recommendations on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020;

(f) Promote the ratification of the Almaty Amendment on Genetically Modified Organisms to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

Chapter 5: Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Recommendation 5.1:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment in cooperation with other government bodies should include in relevant studies the impact of anthropogenic climate change on components of nature and on economic sectors.

Recommendation 5.2:

The Government should:

- (a) Implement policies and measures to increase the resilience of economic sectors to natural and anthropogenic hazards caused by natural climate variability and anthropogenic climate change;
- (b) Ensure that adaptation measures are foreseen in local urban plans.

Recommendation 5.3:

The Government should regularly implement measures to raise awareness on climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact reduction and early warning on natural and anthropogenic hazards caused by natural climate variability and anthropogenic climate change.

Chapter 6: Air protection

Recommendation 6.1:

The Government should ensure that institutions involved in air quality monitoring and assessment are accredited for air quality monitoring and laboratory analysis in order to provide the public with correct, accurate and validated data, which meet data quality objectives.

Recommendation 6.2:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should support the National Environment Agency to enlarge the air quality network and adjust the location of existing monitoring stations where necessary, taking into account the feasible use of equipment according to the type of monitoring station and combining air quality monitoring in rural background locations with the monitoring of the transboundary transport of air pollution (EMEP Programme, level-1 station), if possible.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Government should ensure that the Institute of Public Health regularly assesses the impact of air pollution on health and supports the raising of public awareness on this topic, including by use of an air quality index.

Recommendation 6.4:

The Government should promote the application of organic farming principles, which include very strict limits on the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers and the promotion of composting rather than burning of agricultural waste, which can contribute not only to production of healthy organic food but also to the protection of air quality and other aspects of the environment.

Recommendation 6.5:

The Government should, in cooperation with international donors, favour ensuring funds for energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy sources and the promotion of circular economy activities, which at the same time improve air quality and minimize the adverse effects of climate change.

Chapter 7: Water management

Recommendation 7.1:

The Government should allocate adequate budgets for enabling monitoring and assessment of the status of surface water, coastal water and groundwater bodies, in line with the European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements.

Recommendation 7.2:

The Government should prepare WFD-compliant schemes for assessment of the status of surface water, coastal water and groundwater bodies.

Recommendation 7.3:

The Government should develop and implement river basin management plans compliant with the WFD.

Recommendation 7.4:

The Government should:

(a) Ensure the adoption of a strong policy framework to support further progress on water supply and sewerage following the expiration of the National Strategy of Water Supply and Sewerage for the period 2011–2017;

(b) Based on analyses of administrative reform, elaborate a strategy for water utilities to ensure that they are able to cover the relevant costs, while also taking into account social concerns.

Chapter 8: Waste and chemicals management

Recommendation 8.1:

The Government should strengthen its efforts towards the closure and rehabilitation of legal and illegal dumpsites and the construction of sanitary landfills based on the real needs of the country, taking into account the proposal by the European Commission to phase out the landfilling of recyclable waste by 2025.

Recommendation 8.2:

The Government in cooperation with the municipalities and other stakeholders should establish cost and tariff schemes for waste management services that reflect the actual costs of municipal solid waste management, and request the municipalities to apply them, taking into account the need for support for vulnerable consumers.

Recommendation 8.3:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment in the cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Economy should take measures to establish a viable market for recyclables in which waste collecting and recycling companies will have an economic interest, in order to increase the recycling rate of separately collected waste such as metal, plastic, glass and paper.

Recommendation 8.4:

The Government should put the clean-up and remediation of the existing industrial and mining hotspots high on its agenda, including by developing a specific programme to address this issue.

Recommendation 8.5:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should implement the necessary capacity-building and organizational development activities on chemicals management, following the requirements of the 2016 Law on Chemicals Management.

Recommendation 8.6:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment in cooperation with the Institute of Statistics should establish an effective data collection system on generated hazardous waste and chemicals.

Chapter 9: Biodiversity, forestry and protected areas

Recommendation 9.1:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

(a) Clarify the mandates of the National Environment Agency and the National Agency of Protected Areas in terms of the locations and parameters for the monitoring of biodiversity in protected areas;

(b) Increase funding for the monitoring of forests and biodiversity in order to include all the identified locations and high-nature-value forests, to enable the collection of data on the core set of biodiversity and forestry indicators and make them publicly available.

Recommendation 9.2:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

- (a) Assist newly formed municipalities with the implementation of their forest management responsibilities;
- (b) Build the capacity of municipalities on sustainable forest management.

Recommendation 9.3:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should improve the sustainable management of forests by drafting legislation for the protection of identified high-nature-value forests and non-timber forest products, including the establishment of quotas for the harvesting of non-timber forest products.

Recommendation 9.4:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should prioritize the implementation of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and develop a national forest certification system as an essential element of sustainable forest management practices.

Chapter 10: Transport and environment

Recommendation 10.1:

The Government should adopt the draft sustainable transport plan and implement its provisions.

Recommendation 10.2:

The Government should:

- (a) Invest in the upgrading of railway lines and related facilities;
- (b) Ensure that investments in public transport stations seek to maximize multimodal transport possibilities;
- (c) Encourage municipalities to procure public transport services that maximize environmental performance (e.g., by ensuring that private concession companies improve the environmental performance of buses).

Recommendation 10.3:

The Government should:

- (a) Adapt the road and vehicle ownership taxation structure to ensure that owners of vehicles that emit more pollutants pay higher taxes;
- (b) Ensure that only vehicles of a level equivalent to the most recent EURO standards are allowed to be imported into the country, with a gradual increase of this level over time;
- (c) Ensure that the gap between the number of registered vehicles and the number of vehicles subjected to a technical inspection is closed by introducing strict monitoring and enforcement following the end of an amnesty period.

Recommendation 10.4:

The Government should:

- (a) Dedicate sufficient resources to the enforcement of traffic rules;
- (b) Implement all recommendations in relation to road safety as set out in the National Transport Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2016–2020.

Recommendation 10.5:

The Government should:

- (a) Continue the programme of investments aimed at improving the environmental performance of the transport sector in ports (e.g., the treatment of waste);

- (b) Complete accession to Annex VI (Regulations for the Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

Chapter 11: Energy, industry and environment

Recommendation 11.1:

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy should promote:

- (a) The production of electrical energy from alternative sources to hydroelectric power stations, with particular reference to other renewable sources;
- (b) The use of natural gas as a cleaner combustible input for industrial activities, when a natural gas network becomes available in the country.

Recommendation 11.2:

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy should carry out an environmental analysis of the oil extraction industry in order to propose improvements to its efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Recommendation 11.3:

The Government should amend the relevant legislation to ensure that the permitting process includes an environmental permit, an exploration licence and a concession agreement, in line with the European Union Industrial Emissions Directive.

Recommendation 11.4:

The Government in cooperation with relevant municipalities and the private sector should develop best practices to use the abandoned industrial sites, at the same time ensuring their environmental rehabilitation and landscape improvement.

See Recommendation 8.4.

Recommendation 11.5:

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment and municipalities should create an enabling legal and institutional framework for the recovery of waste to be used as raw materials in the manufacturing industry.

Recommendation 11.6:

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment should promote (also by using fiscal incentives and fast authorization processes) the installation of innovative processing plants based on the use of cleaner production methods, focused on energy efficiency and the reduction of waste, following the criteria established by best available techniques.

Recommendation 11.7:

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment should:

- (a) Prepare and submit a project proposal in the framework of the Assistance Programme of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents to address needs and challenges in the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Proceed with the identification of hazardous activities with possible transboundary effects and their notification to neighbouring countries;
- (c) Ensure timely submission of implementation reports under the Convention.
-