

Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (EfE)

Belgrade, Serbia

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ITEM 2. Assessment and Implementation

(a) State of the environment and monitoring and assessment

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Mr Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to express appreciation also from Estonian side to the European Environment Agency for the compilation of a comprehensive indicator-based Report about European environmental developments during recent years.

Despite some dubious facts² concerning Estonia in the fourth assessment report, it is crucial to get a clear overall picture about environmental trends and achievements in 53 pan-European countries. It is needed to the decision-makers as well as to the public, enabling to compare your country with others, thus stimulating states to improve their environmental 'behaviour'. Despite some gaps in data flows, it hopefully does not affect the general picture and results of this assessment significantly.

The 4. Assessment Report focuses to different environmental indicators, which might give completely different viewpoint to environmental issues compared to quantitative and qualitative data we are used to. For example, Estonia has successfully completed the obligation under Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gases emissions. Same time, based on Reports' indicator, we are on the top of greenhouse gases emissions per capita among pan-European countries. This gives us a clear signal that further efforts must be made, even if we think we have accomplished the environmental requirements.

As stated and recommended in the Report, a key-issues for next years should be the implementation and enforcement of existing commitment as well as the setting of clear and realistic targets. Also the need for strengthen the will to act on environmental issues was mentioned. Without any doubt - those are crucial issues to discuss here, on this conference and afterwards. Pan-European countries face very different economical and environmental problems. If some countries have the poverty rate at 40-50% as stated in the Report, it will probably affect their implementation capacity on

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² Aruande kohaselt: Eesti pole esitanud andmeid palju elanikest saab ühisveevärgist vett; kanalisatsiooniga liitunud elanike arv pole 1994.a võrreldes muutunud; Eesti on kasvuhuonegaasidega saastamises elaniku kohta pan-Euroopa esikolmikus

environmental issues. From Estonian experience in 1990ies it should be mentioned that during economical depression it is quite difficult to integrate environmental targets to other policies and make people interested in (global) environmental problems. Unfortunately too often economical interests override environmental concerns, especially on local level (but it might occur also on regional or even international level). Therefore it is crucial to integrate environmental targets into other policies to avoid decline in environmental quality and guarantee the proper implementation of those policies.

As the implementation on national level depends on the success of local or sub-national activities - our attention, aid and further co-operation should be focussed also to sub-national level to strengthen and ensure the 'will to act' in practice. Training, capacity building and raising environmental awareness are the key-activities for successful implementation. From Estonian side the issues we have experience to share are for example the organisation of waste management system, sustainable use of nature resources, designation of green areas to protect biodiversity and IT-solutions to guarantee adequate GIS-based up-to-dated databases and qualitative dataflows for reporting.

The tighter co-operation between pan-European countries themselves as well as with international agencies, eg to force the development of assistance programs on environmental monitoring, assessment etc, should contribute to implementation efforts in EECCA and SEE states as well to help to reduce shortcomings in data and reporting. *Hopefully the Fifth European Environmental Assessment states already improved implementation and reporting.*

I would like to emphasize the importance of graphic material in the Report as it ables to make complex environmental problems, concerns and trends understandable also to general public, not only specialists or experts. In order to raise environmental awareness the importance of a clear and easily understandable visual information is beyond all questions.

The key-problems and challenges indicated in the Report are present also in Estonia. For example increasing pressure by transport-vehicles is a serious problem in urban areas. Although development of public transport system is a high-priority task in a State Environmental Strategy, several development and action plans, the extensive urbanization and inadequate physical planning on local level does not always endorse the national environmental priorities.

Another, repeatedly mentioned problem - overfishing - can be solved through adequate supervision which presuppose effective institutional capacity. An effective supervision activity by Environmental

Inspectorate have reduced illegal activities in Estonia.

The Belgrad Conference is designated as a 'conference of delivery'. However, the 'delivery' may not fulfill our expectations if the implementation of conventions & agreements is weak.