

# 1. Introduction

## **1.1. Environment reporting, a part of the ‘Environment for Europe’ process**

This report prepared by the European Environment Agency for the Environmental Ministers conference in Kiev in May 2003 is the third pan-European State of the Environment report prepared in the context of the ‘Environment Programme for Europe’. The two earlier reports were *Europe’s Environment: the Dobris Assessment* and *Europe’s Environment: the Second Assessment*. This third report, however, is the first to overview progress in the environment in the whole of the European UNECE region. It covers Europe, the whole of Russia, the Caucasian and Central Asian countries, in other words the full geographical area of the ‘Environment for Europe’ political process.

Since the first Ministerial conference ‘Environment for Europe’, held in Dobris Castle in 1991, there has been a lot of progress in pan-European cooperation to protect the environment. The development of state of the environment reports for supporting the Environment for Europe process, including indicators, shows a simultaneous improvement in coordination and harmonisation of information provision for policy making.

In 1991 the environment ministers of all European countries, meeting in Dobris Castle in the Czech Republic launched the ‘Environment for Europe’ process, which aims to inspire, define and coordinate policies for environmental protection throughout Europe under the auspices of and the coordination by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Since then a large number of international conventions have been ratified, a process to continue at the Kiev conference where legislation on environmental impact assessment and pollution registers will be on the agenda.

At the Dobris meeting the ministers requested a baseline study on the state of the environment in Europe to base their policies on. This study became the landmark *Europe’s Environment: the Dobris Assessment*, which was available in draft form at the second meeting in Lucerne in 1993, and finally published at the time of the Ministerial meeting in Sofia in 1995. The Dobris assessment identified twelve prominent environmental problems of particular European concern.

Recognizing the usefulness of the assessment, the Sofia Ministerial conference requested the European Environment Agency to produce a follow-up report on progress since the Dobris meeting. The resulting report *Europe’s Environment: the Second Assessment* was presented to the Aarhus Ministerial conference in 1998. The second assessment report concluded that most progress was made in those areas for which international legal instruments existed whilst progress was especially poor in topics such as waste management, over-fishing, soil degradation and integration of environment in the transport and agriculture sector. All along the production of the report, a dialogue with the secretariat of the Aarhus Conference was established so to link the outcomes of the assessments with the preparation of the policy agenda. In this context, with the further development of pan-European initiatives and policies, the need for indicators to follow regularly progress and to introduce an element of accountability into the process became clear. The development towards indicator-based reporting was thus endorsed and the Aarhus ministerial conference requested the European Environment Agency to produce, together with existing national

and international networks a report based on indicators for their next Ministerial meeting in Kiev. Europe's environment: the third assessment is the Agency's response to this request.

## ***1.2. Towards a more integrated reporting process in Europe***

One of the most important achievements of the 1998 Ministerial conference has been 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, to participation and to access to justice in the environmental sphere, its goal is to contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well being. Amongst its obligations, the convention requests all signatories to make available their environmental information to the public and includes the 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 in national environmental monitoring and reporting. The Kiev report and eventual follow up studies may become a catalyst for improved information and data flows on the national and on the pan-European level.

The need for a more coordinated cooperation in this area of work was emphasised at a conference on Environmental Monitoring organised by the Russian Federation in Moscow in January 2001. All countries decided in order to operationalize their contribution to information gathering at 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 received the mandate to investigate possible improvements in monitoring, data exchange and reporting especially in the NIS. To help implement this task, the working group decided to take the production of the Kiev report as the main test case so to come up with very concrete and documented recommendations for monitoring and reporting in European countries, for addressing by the Kiev ministerial conference.

WGEM has fulfilled the indispensable function of guiding the data collection for the Kiev report in countries not member of the European Environment Agency. WGEM has discussed the guidelines for the data collection for the Kiev report, the draft questionnaires and its members have functioned as national contact points during the data collection exercise. During this phase they had to cope with the challenges of working together with other institutes in their countries holding the data, which in some cases revealed bureaucratic and practical difficulties in the access to information. Due to the absence of bilateral funding and the late confirmation of funding by the European Commission, 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.

Providing the basis for a phase of 'learning from lessons', the Kiev report marks the start of a period of renewed cooperation in environmental monitoring and reporting in Europe. From the start of its activities, the WGEM has involved itself in articulating the contents of the Kiev report to make the report relevant to policies and to include the proper analyses. Immediately afterwards the WGEM involved itself in the necessary data flows and information processing. Such an activity is important to establish an effective bridge between a responsive monitoring system and a relevant reporting process in support of policy making. The need for harmonization of these processes at pan-European level appears to be increasing. Over 2002 and 2003 the thirteen accession countries

to the European Union joined the European Environment Agency as full members. In March 2003 the Council of the European Union is expected to approve the joining of ten of these countries to the EU in 2004. The Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine and somewhat later Moldova will be at the eastern border of the enlarged Union. After joining of Turkey, for which no date of accession has been given yet, the Caucasian countries would be bordering the EU as well. Cooperation between the EU and the Balkan-countries is well underway, with many reconstruction projects being implemented for recovering from the damage of war.

For supporting policy processes with environmental information, knowledge on the developments in the whole of the European continent will therefore increasingly be necessary. This will require, as stated in the document on the lessons learned from the Kiev data collection, on the national level, a higher level of investment in basic environmental monitoring infrastructure (measuring equipment, data processing and exchange facilities, publishing) in the NIS. On the international level it will require the continuation of a framework for cooperation between countries as it has been provided by the UNECE Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring in the past years.

### ***1.3. Key policy developments***

The forthcoming Kiev ministerial conference follows on the World Conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002. Although the current report focuses on the environmental aspect of sustainable development, it still tries to draw the lines from the global issues regarding sustainable development to their implementation in Europe.

In the western part of Europe the main policy lines are being set out by the European Union, which is developing an interlinked set of policies: the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental action programme encompassing the period up to 2010, the Cardiff process for the integration of environment in other policies and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. These policies will be the frame for detailed strategies and actions enhancing sustainable development within the EU, including the external dimension of those policies.

In central Europe the accession process to the European Union 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 the choice to prioritise other (environmental) measures enhancing sustainable development. In the NIS environmental problems are often of a different scale than in western Europe, while the financial situation is so much worse. Cooperation between countries is less developed, although a start has been made to develop a common sustainable development strategy for the Kiev conference.

The Kiev report shows developments in each of these three regions of Europe against the policy background sketched above. Furthermore, the outcomes of the Johannesburg conference show that there are common lines 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 risk management 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, as well sustainable production and consumption patterns.

The main focus of the Kiev report, however, is to follow progress in the Environment for Europe programme. Hence the reader can find in this report:

- A number of chapters on developments in sectors such as agriculture and transport to assess progress in the Ministerial intentions to improve the integration of environment in sectoral policies;
- A number of chapters on environmental issues, which focus on the implementation of the international conventions. These chapters answer the general question on progress since the ministers first met in Dobris Castle;
- A final chapter on the successes and challenges in the implementation of specific instruments suggested in the various ministerial meetings;
- Annexes giving statistics by country, which could not be shown in the aggregated indicators in the report.

The current report thus differs from its predecessors in several aspects: it is really pan-European in its geographical scope, it is more than previous reports based on indicators, it joins detailed information gathered from the countries with general outcomes regarding future scenarios taken from UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) process and it is firmly rooted in an emerging structure for reporting on the pan-European level.

*(note for reviewers: the GEO information will be added to the chapters at a later stage)*

#### Box 1.1: Country groupings used in this report

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

Western Europe	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (EU15), Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland (EFTA 4), including the small states Andorra, Monaco, San Marino.
Central and Eastern Europe	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, FYROM, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.
Newly Independent States	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan Uzbekistan.

(note that Cyprus, Malta and Turkey are included in CEE)

Seen the special position of the accession countries to the European Union, it sometimes makes sense to divide Central and Eastern Europe in two and make a regional subdivision in the NIS:

Western Europe	As above
EU Accession Countries	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.
Balkan countries	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Yugoslavia
Russia and the Western NIS	Belarus, Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine
Caucasian countries	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia
Central Asian countries	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan Uzbekistan.

## **Acknowledgements**

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As with previous editions, it has not been easy to secure timely funding for the Kiev report project and again the European Communities have been the main donor. The Kiev report was funded by the European Environment Agency and from the PHARE, Cards and TACIS programmes of the European Commission. UNECE and UNEP made contributions in kind by freeing their staff to support the compilation of the report. Denmark provided support to enable participation of representatives of NIS countries to the WGEM, Switzerland made available a national expert to the EEA. Many other countries contributed considerably in kind by making their data available for the report. We are grateful for all the enthusiasm and support that we have received during the production of this report (see also Acknowledgements hereafter).

(after the introduction acknowledgements of the contributions of institutions and individuals will be included).

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