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## Second cycle of Environmental Performance Reviews in Central Asia — Activities and Challenges

The second EPRs focus on assessing progress since the first review and emphasize the implementation and financing of environmental policy, the integration of environmental concerns into particular economic sectors, and the promotion of sustainable development.

Since 2007, EPR activities have focused strongly on Central Asian countries with a view to addressing their continuing environmental challenges. Second reviews are currently underway in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. They are complementary to other UNECE activities in the region, including those under the UNECE regional Environmental Conventions and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) which is jointly supported by UNECE and UNESCAP.

### Kazakhstan

Against the background of strong economic growth – more than 10% on average per year since 2000 – and declining poverty, the review has shown that Kazakhstan still has a long way to go in terms of managing its environment.

Environmental spending (0.5% of the overall government budget) is too low for a country with significant environmental challenges. Among the major problems that Kazakhstan is facing are greenhouse gas emissions per GDP that rank among the highest in the world, the environmental situation around the Aral Sea and Lake Balkhash, the drastic reduction of the Caspian Sea sturgeon population, land degradation and desertification, the accumulation of untreated industrial waste, radioactive contamination, industrial pollution (especially from mining and heavy industries), and insufficient infrastructure for water and solid waste.

The 35 recommendations of the international EPR expert team were approved in April 2008 by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and by Kazakhstan which committed to implement them.

Among the recommendations were that environmental legislation be improved. The Government should further strengthen the institutional capacity for environmental compliance, modernize and upgrade the environmental monitoring networks, and in particular develop a monitoring network in the Aral Sea area. EPR experts also asked that the protocols to the five UNECE Conventions be ratified and that the process of



Issyk Kul biosphere reserve, Kyrgyzstan

ratification of the Kyoto Protocol be speeded up.

The review also recommended that the existing system of pollution charges be reviewed and a national waste management system established. The Government should increase environment-related expenditures. Cumulative effects of mineral resources extraction, including new oilfields and current oil exploration and related activities, should be properly assessed in order to reduce the serious adverse environmental, health and safety impacts, especially in the Caspian Sea region. The Government should also establish an appropriate body for integrated water management.

### Kyrgyzstan

The EPR main mission to Kyrgyzstan took place in May/June 2008 and international experts identified a number of challenges and shortcomings regarding environmental policymaking and implementation, the mobilizing of financial resources for environmental protection, and the integration of environmental concerns into sectors such as water, land, biodiversity and forests.

Frequent reorganization of, and weak cooperation between, environmental authorities, low environmental expenditures and incentives to reduce pollution, deficiencies in water management and increasing land degradation are among the challenges Kyrgyzstan faces. A field visit to the Issyk-Kul protected area showed a need for more committed environmental protection and integrated regional planning in areas that are under substantial pressure from anthropogenic activities such as tourism.



Erosion and desertification effects in Kyrgyz mountains



Not an official record - For information only

## Uzbekistan

The EPR of Uzbekistan was also initiated in June 2008, and a preliminary mission to the country held. Discussions with the highest environmental authorities of the country and a number of other important ministries resulted in identifying the main issues to be covered in the second review. The proposal is now with the Uzbek authorities for their consideration and approval.

## Cross-cutting issues

The Central Asian countries share a number of common challenges. Among the main issues are the management of water resources, but also land management and land protection to combat degradation and to support agricultural structures which are vital for rural development and food security. In addition, the impacts of mining and mineral extraction, energy and waste management are recurring issues which are addressed in the EPRs in Central Asia. Some of the topics require strengthened regional cooperation, for instance regarding agreements on water release and supply schemes in the region.

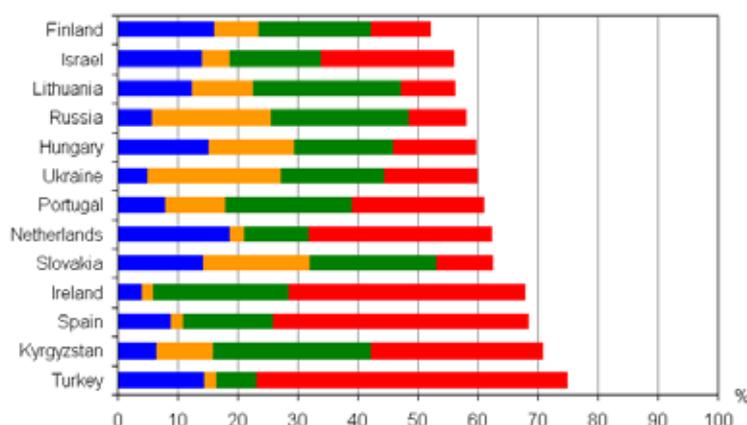
Together with other UNECE initiatives and international organizations (see for example *What UNECE Does For You, № 9* of August 2007 and *№16* of February 2008), the EPR programme will continue to develop solutions to these problems. It is also expected that carrying out EPRs in different countries of Central Asia within a short period of time will eventually contribute to strengthening regional cooperation, as the countries are provided with similar tools and approaches to environmental policy and management. Second EPRs can also create the basis for an exchange of views to solve common concerns or seek appropriate solutions. ❖

Wild iris in Issyk-Kul biosphere reserve, Kyrgyzstan

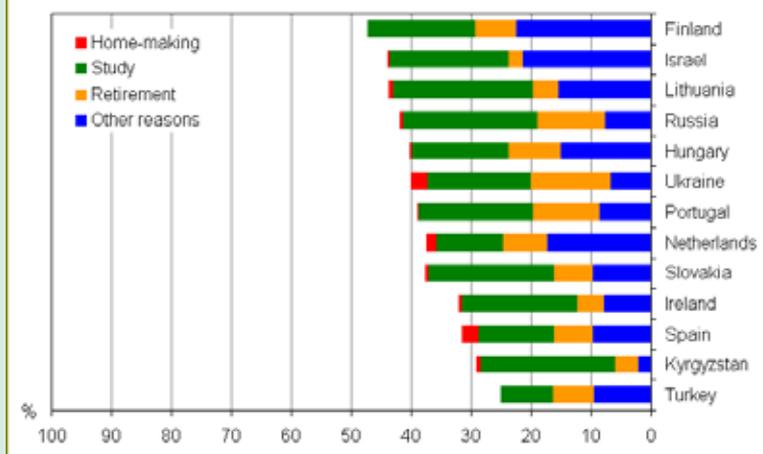


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Share of women in the economically inactive population aged 15-64, 2006



Share of men in the economically inactive population aged 15-64, 2006



Source : UNECE Gender Statistics Database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>)

## Facts and Figures

### Women are more economically inactive than men

Data on the economically inactive population are attracting increasing attention in many countries, because this group represents a potential source of labour supply.

The propensity to stay out of work varies according to age and sex. In the working-age population, women are much more frequently inactive than men in most UNECE countries. Only in Finland is the share of inactive women and men almost equal. In Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Spain and Ireland, women represent more than two thirds of the inactive population.

The charts also show the reasons for being economically inactive, including study, home-making, retirement, and illness or disability (included in "other reasons"). People in the first two groups are more likely to move into work in the short or longer term.

Differences across countries and between men and women are mainly due to the proportion of home-making women. In Finland, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Slovakia, they represent 10% or less of all economically inactive persons. This proportion is much higher in Turkey (52%), Spain (43%) and Ireland (39%). ❖

*Note : The economically inactive population includes all the persons who are not part of the labour force, i.e. are neither working nor seeking a job.*