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EPR

Third Environmental Performance Review of the Republic of Moldova shows waste management and biodiversity conservation remain top priorities

Despite progress in recent years in the country's policy framework related to the environment and sustainable development, the Republic of Moldova faces significant challenges with regard to wastewater management, municipal solid waste management and biodiversity conservation. These are the main findings of the third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of the Republic of Moldova, undertaken by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The findings were presented by UNECE and Moldovan authorities on 5 June 2014 in Chisinau, to coincide with the celebration of World Environment Day.

The Review notes that, since the Second EPR in 2005, the Republic of Moldova has been developing sectoral policies, such as agriculture, energy and water, which have an impact on the environment. These include the National Energy Efficiency Programme for 2011–2020, supported by three-year national action plans; the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Agro-industrial Sector for 2008–2015, which seeks to combat land degradation through afforestation and the creation of new vineyards and orchards; and the 2007 Strategy for Water Supply and Sanitation of Communities, which sets specific medium-term (2008–2012) and long-term (2012–2025) objectives, but without a national water action plan and financing.

A key instrument to address the serious issue of soil degradation is the National Programme for Conservation and Improvement of Soil Fertility for 2011–2020, which promotes the use of green manure, afforestation of highly eroded grasslands and the cultivation of grassy crops between rows in orchards and vineyards. Organic agriculture is also making some head way in the country, with 253 farms and some 32,000 hectares, or 1.7 per cent of the total agricultural lands, either certified or under conversion for organic agriculture.

Despite this policy framework development, however, the country faces a number of challenges, in particular, with regard to wastewater management. The situation regarding wastewater treatment in the country is bleak. In 2010, only 17 of 198 wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) (9%) were in a satisfactory state, 112 (56%) required repairs and 69 (35%) required full refurbishment. Most WWTPs are only used in practice for mechanical treatment. As a result, discharges from WWTPs into water bodies contain organic substances, ammonium and nitrates. Many industrial WWTPs are old and obsolete. Currently, a significant amount of untreated industrial wastewater is discharged directly into rivers.

Another key area for concern is municipal solid waste management; the current waste management practice relies mainly on disposal in dumpsites. These are, in the majority of cases, small, uncontrolled and operating without an environmental permit. Only 12 national level permits have been issued for disposal sites in the country. The remaining 1,864 disposal sites are operating on the basis of land allocation decisions issued by a local council.

Biodiversity conservation is also an issue in the country. Only about 2% of the country's grasslands are in a natural or semi-natural state. This low percentage is additionally fragmented: intensive agriculture has pushed the ecological integrity of the steppe habitat to its limits. Today, natural steppe communities have been preserved only in small and isolated areas: only five protected areas preserving steppe vegetation exist, with a total area of less than 1 per cent of the country's surface. It is estimated that this is too low to protect the gene pool of steppe plant communities in the country. The biodiversity of the steppe has been particularly altered and affected due to intensive grazing, soil erosion and salinization and the intensive use of fertilizers.

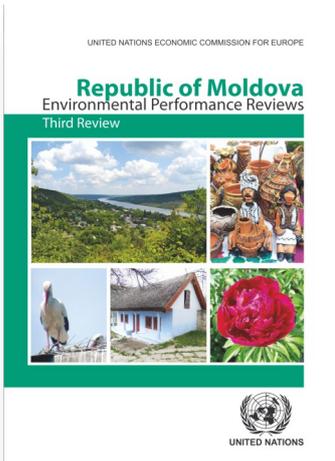
The Review concludes with a set of 41 recommendations to assist the Republic of Moldova in improving its environmental management, to better integrate the goals of sustainable development into sectoral policies, to promote greater accountability to the public and to strengthen cooperation with the international community. The recommendations were approved by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy in October 2013.

The EPR of the Republic of Moldova is based on an information-gathering mission to the country in February 2013, and takes stock of progress made since 2005 in 10 areas of importance to the country related to environmental policymaking, implementation and financing, environmental monitoring, climate change, water, waste, biodiversity conservation, agriculture and cooperation with other countries on the environment. □



The Review and its highlights are available online from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35481>.
For more information on the EPR Programme, please contact: info.epr@unece.org.

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How to improve the measurement of the gross domestic product?



In 2008, the United Nations, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development jointly released the new international statistical standard: **The System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA)**. This is a statistical framework that details a set of macroeconomic accounts that can be used by governments, businesses, and international organizations for analysis, research, and policy making. It provides the methodology for the calculation of one of the most important economic indicators for policymakers: the gross domestic product (GDP) – but also for measures of production, income, consumption, savings and international trade.

Compared to previous versions, the 2008 SNA elaborates on aspects of the economy that have become more prevalent in recent years, or that have garnered recent analytical attention. These include the treatment and classification of assets; the contribution of the knowledge economy (R&D); the financial sector; globalization and related issues; links between the general government and public sector; and the informal sector.

Since 2009, countries around the world have started implementing the 2008 SNA. This was a difficult process that required serious investment in the implementation of new surveys and the adaptation of existing data sources, the development of new estimation techniques, software, testing of the results, backwards revision of existing time series, consultation and education of the main users. In 2014, most of the UNECE countries will publish revised national accounts data in accordance with the 2008 SNA. The meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts, organized in May by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD, provided a forum for countries to share experience and present the results of the revision. It attracted around 100 delegates from Europe, Asia, North and Latin America, as well as international organizations.

Participants emphasized the importance of a good communication strategy for the 2008 SNA revision and asked the UNECE Steering Group on National Accounts to develop a generic presentation and guidelines for the dialogue with main users.

Another important item for discussion was globalization and national accounts. Global production evolves constantly and now encompasses a broad range of business arrangements. A dedicated UNECE Task force developed a *Guide to Measuring Global Production*, which proposes internationally comparable statistical approaches for dealing with global production arrangements. The draft was discussed at the meeting. A dedicated meeting will be organized in 2015 to allow countries to share practical experience with data collection and compilation methods.

Following a request by the UN Statistical Commission, UNECE developed recommendations and is putting efforts into facilitating the implementation of the 2008 SNA in Eastern Europe, South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. A special session discussed the specific problems of these countries, which have achieved significant progress, although important challenges remain. UNECE together with partner organizations will organize a workshop in 2015 to provide support on the way forward. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2014.05.sna.html> or contact Tihomira Dimova at: tihomira.dimova@unece.org.

Off the Press

Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for International Transport Networks

In recent years the impacts of climate change on various human activities have been considered by Governments and International Organizations, but relatively little consideration has been given to impacts associated with the infrastructure and operations of international transport networks and related adaptation measures.

Recognizing the need for concerted action, experts from various countries, international organizations and academia, under the auspices of UNECE established a Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for International Transport Networks. This publication presents the results of this work.

It consists of 5 substantive chapters. Chapter 1 provides a short review of the scientific background of climate change and its effects on both a global scale and in the UNECE region. Chapter 2 presents some of the potential impacts of the different manifestations of climate change on transport networks. This section pays particular emphasis identifying issues pertinent to transport infrastructure in the UNECE region and taking into account the different modes of transportation. Chapter 3 presents a brief analysis of the results of the questionnaire circulated to UNECE member countries and international organizations in 2012. Chapter 4 provides a summary of available adaptation responses. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the conclusions and recommendations of the Group of Experts. □

The publication is available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35462>.

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