

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

EPR of Slovenia:
Report on Follow-up



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OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The preparation of the accession to the European Union constituted the main task for the Slovene Government during most of the period since the EPR Peer Review (May 1997). The resources also of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MEPP) were fully absorbed by the accession process. As a result, in general, those of the EPR recommendations that coincided with accession requirements were priority items for implementation, while other recommendations received less attention. However, the large majority of the recommendations meet this condition, so that the overall degree of implementation is high.

The EPR project was initially met with reticence in many Slovene institutions. It was seen as yet one more internationally instigated project entrusted to foreign experts not necessarily familiar with Slovene conditions. High-level governmental support for the EPR project assured that this basic attitude — not uncommon in many other countries in transition — did not have any negative influence on the implementation of the project. The initial attitude also changed once the EPR report was issued. The positive main results as well as the beneficial side-effects had become apparent. The recognized primary results were (a) the provision of a comprehensive evaluation of environmental management in all main areas of concern, (b) the preparation of concise and complete assessments of environmental management and policy issues in some areas, where such assessments had not existed before (clearest case: Chapter 12 on Environmental concerns in agriculture), and (c) the publication of environmental data in many chapters, to which access had been difficult. The main side effect of the project was that lateral coordination and cooperation across different public institutions was triggered during EPR project implementation. The corresponding cooperation contacts and mechanisms are seen to have facilitated the beginning of the accession process to the European Union, during which it was strengthened by the discovery of common interests between administrations that previously had none.

As a result of these benefits, the EPR project today receives a clearly positive appreciation in Slovenia. During the past two and a half years, the EPR report has been used as a frequent reference. The translation of the report and its wide circulation in the Slovene language increased its usefulness as a reference publication. The chapters on Waste management (Chapter 6) on Nature conservation and biodiversity management (Chapter 7), on Introduction on cleaner technologies (Chapter 9), and on Environmental concerns in agriculture (Chapter 10) appear to have been the most referred to. At present, the value of the EPR recommendations decreases in Slovenia, as the changes related to the transition and EU accession processes since its completion have been substantial.

Chapter 1: Legal Instruments and Institutional Arrangements

GENERAL TREND

Follow-up was dominated by three main achievements: (a) the approval of a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), setting priorities in water, waste and nature management; (b) the development of an IEA scheme that is fully in line with EU requirements; and (c) the beginning development of an integrated environmental information system in close contact with the European Environmental Agency, which should considerably improve public access to environmental information. In addition, a decision was taken to create an environmental protection agency, in order to separate environmental programmatic work from implementation functions, but the detailed assignments for the agency are not yet clear. Furthermore, decisions were taken to build environmental capacities at local level, and training programmes will start in the year 2000. Regarding public participation, the future developments will be determined by the work on the implementation of the Aarhus Convention. Environmental inspection continues to be a considerable problem, but its development is a key programme in the EU accession process. Coordination between different administrations is currently entrusted to the Service for European Affairs, headed by a minister. As part of the implementation of NEAP, the environmental ministry intends to establish a coordinating body. On the whole, it appears that fully convincing coordination mechanisms will only emerge in the future, but the need for improved coordination appears to be felt by many institutions, and it will undoubtedly grow further in the process of EU accession.

No progress has been made in the establishment of a regional administration. Pragmatic ad hoc solutions are defined to deal with most urgent requirements (i.e. tiny water basin managements exist, statistical regions were defined, etc.), but the fundamental dilemma found during the implementation of the EPR project still prevails. It consists of economic considerations of paying for another administrative layer on one side, and the need for promoting, where necessary, cooperation between local administrations on the other.

Recommendation 1.1:

The improvement of cooperation between ministries, departments, regional and local authorities should be seen as a priority. In preparing schemes that would enable effective cooperation at all levels of the partner institutions in the medium term, a special cooperation unit could perhaps be created in the MoEPP. It should include economic expertise in order to be able to assess costs of commitments and programmes, both national and international. Current key issues requiring cooperation are international cooperation, land administration and information (especially the land register and the land cadastre), air pollution, water management, nature conservation, introduction of cleaner technologies, and environmental aspects of agriculture as well as of transport. The creation of similar units in other key ministries - such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs - would be desirable.

A Governmental Service for European Affairs was established for international cooperation and coordination among ministries. It is headed by the Minister for European affairs. This service has effectively improved governmental cooperation and is felt to obviate at this time the need for further initiatives. A special EU department was established in the Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning. The National Environmental Action Programme (NEAP) foresees the creation of a coordination body for its implementation. Various workgroups are established for coordination and interdisciplinary work in statistics (called council or thematic co-councils). Regarding international cooperation, a new unit centralizes all data on the arrival of foreign funds, their sources and purposes.

Recommendation 1.2:

The formal introduction of a regional level of public management should be considered. If this is impossible, the solution of environmental management problems involving the need for cooperation between different local administrations and/or local administrations and the national Government should be sought on the basis of generally defined procedures and not case by case.

The introduction of a regional level of public management remains controversial in the country. A National development plan and a strategy for consistent regional development are being established with PHARE support. It focuses on sustainable development in industry, transport, environment and energy. For planning purposes, the statistical regions are used, but they do not have established administrations.

Recommendation 1.3:

Staff and other resources available for state inspection should be increased to levels that permit the full implementation of legislated inspection tasks. The indispensable strengthening of the environmental state inspection in terms of both numbers and qualifications should benefit from all relevant facilities that exist in the framework of the European Union (i.e. IMPELNET), as they are becoming available to Slovenia.

The reorganisation of inspectorates was finished in June 1999. The inspectorates for environment and physical planning were integrated through the creation of 8 regional units with united management. Staff was substantially increased. Plans for a further development of the environmental inspectorate are under way as a key programme in the EU accession process.

Recommendation 1.4:

The enforcement of all environmental legal instruments should be seen as a priority. The strict application of all such instruments, including procedures that might lead to legal sanctions of violations of applicable laws and regulations, should be envisaged.

Much of EU legislation has been transposed into national legislation. The role of the Environmental inspection as a part of the Integrated Inspectorate is to ensure that emission levels are in compliance with national environmental legislation. For all violations of the environmental standards and non-compliance, inspectors issue written orders stating what the facility must do to redress the situation.

Recommendation 1.5:

The finalisation of the NEAP should be considered a first priority.

This recommendation is implemented. The NEAP priorities are water, waste and nature management.

Recommendation 1.6:

A governmentally designed national lead agency should develop and support a comprehensive environmental information system, covering also priority areas like water or waste information. Creation and maintenance of information being expensive, the lead agency should be sufficiently equipped with staff and material resources to coordinate the different data sources with substantive authority. The agency should not only steer the conceptual development of the information system and store data; it should also service regional, national and international user groups.

The creation of an environmental agency is planned for the development of programmes and project documents, while the ministry will in the future concentrate on implementation issues. However, the organization of the agency is not yet clear. Regarding the development of an integrated environmental information system, the decision is to build it stepwise. Development has started in cooperation with Austria and Germany. Parts of the information system (basic databases for waste and nature information) are being built up with priority. The national implementation of EIONET-SI will be used as the frame for data flow from their sources (monitoring and other) to the reports, policy making and performance evaluation. It will provide aggregated databases, communication between partners, easier access to information and will support the reporting processes in the country, to the European Commission, conventions and the UN. The work is harmonized with the needs and methodologies of the European Environmental Agency.

Recommendation 1.7:

Existing mechanisms for making adequate environmental information available to the general public should be improved. They should particularly cover air and water quality information.

This issue is being tackled in the implementation of the Aarhus convention and of the EU Directive for free access to environmental information. EIONET-SI is seen as the key instrument. Its implementation has started. Easy access to all kinds of environmental reports, selected environmental data for public and elaborated presentation techniques (under development) will be provided through the internet. Communication will be enabled with the public. Data will be regularly updated. The first phase of the selection of adequate indicators is completed. Connection to international activities in this field (EEA, Clearing House Mechanism for Biodiversity, coastal observatories and communication system in the frame of Alpine convention) will be established. The development of Water information in this framework is the subject of a twinning project with France in 2000.

Chapter 2: International Co-operation

Recommendation 2.1:

The international agreements aiming at species protection should be ratified, in particular the Bern, Bonn and Washington Conventions. (See also Recommendations 7.1 and 7.5)

The Bonn Convention was ratified on 2 October 1998 and the Bern Convention on 15 June 1999. The ratification of the Washington Convention is in the Parliamentary procedure and expected to be ratified before end of the year 1999.

Recommendation 2.2:

Both the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Convention on Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River should be ratified. Consideration might also be given to the possible ratification of other relevant international agreements. (See also Recommendation 4.5)

The ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has been ratified in March 1999. Work focuses on programme development for health and monitoring aspects. The Convention on Co-operation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River has been ratified in July 1999. UNDP funded a pollution reduction programme for the Danube river basin, and GEF money is available for the solution of transboundary emission problems. The previous list of 12 hot spots is superseded by a new list of 15. The implementation plan for the Aarhus Convention is in preparation and ratification is expected for the year 2000.

Recommendation 2.3:

Slovenia should take the initiative of revitalising the Alpe-Adria Commission and encourage its partners to harmonise their actions regarding coastal management of the Adriatic coast and to consider enlarging the Commission to other countries also contributing to the northern Adriatic Sea eutrophication.

The Alpe Adria Commission works permanently, and Slovenia is satisfied with the work. The commission includes 6 countries (Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia), with 18 regions. Six committees work inside the Alpe Adria structure, including the Commission for spatial planning and environment protection, with its four working groups:

- Spatial planning: prepares common guidelines for sustainable development and short reports from this region for inclusion in European programmes.
- Environmental protection: prepares Recommendations for easier inclusion of objectives of environmental protection into spatial planning in the regions of Alpe Adria.
- Protection against accidents: operational communication network with common databases.
- Catalogue of databases: support of all 4 working groups.

There is also a permanent group for the monitoring of the quality of the sea in the Northern Jadran.

Recommendation 2.4:

The priority for the work of the Trilateral Commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea in the near future should be to establish a contingency plan regarding coastal and sea pollution of the Adriatic Sea.

The contingency plan has been prepared and partly implemented with support from the Netherlands. Institutional problems will have to be solved in the process of full implementation. Slovenia plays a very active role in this Commission. Much work is devoted to the preparation of a master plan for the Mediterranean Sea. A second priority for the near future is the formal adaptation of the regulation of the Commission to the new political, environmental and economic conditions in the area.

Recommendation 2.5:

A training programme for customs and environmental inspectors responsible for the control of the provisions of the Basel Convention should be envisaged.

Training of the inspectors within the EU-IMPEL and AC-IMPEL networks started, through exchange programmes and other activities with Austria (two checkpoints till now, more are planned). Inspectors are also trained through Slovenia's own training programme, which covers legal and technical aspects. The participants of the IMPEL and AC-IMPEL seminars share their experience with other inspectors.

Chapter 3: Spatial Planning

GENERAL TREND

Implementation of recommendations in this area appear to be particularly slow, because the future role of spatial planning in the country and its relationships to social and economic development planning remain politically undefined. While a new spatial planning law goes into governmental coordination at the end of 1999, it is not clear whether this basic grievance is remedied in the draft law. A new spatial plan for Slovenia and a report on the state of spatial planning are under preparation, in the current situation without guidance by relevant parliamentary decisions. A project funded through the World Bank is active in the development of land information. It is expected that it will have beneficial effects on the emergence of a land market in Slovenia. The project may also help to streamline discussions over alternative uses of land.

Recommendation 3.1:

A new law on spatial planning to serve as a basis for harmonising other legislation on land use and building should be finalised and adopted with priority.

A law on spatial planning is in drafting stage for consideration by the minister. It is planned to submit it to inter-ministerial concertation at the end of 1999, and to Parliament early in 2000.

Recommendation 3.2:

Incorporate environmental assessment procedures into the everyday operation of city development and planning, and consider whether applying an ecosystem approach in vulnerability studies is feasible, given the difficulties of defining the natural boundaries of ecosystems.

Environmental assessment procedures are implemented in city development. EIA is not part of the planning phase, because the Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment has not been adopted at EU level yet. Since the implementation of EIA (1/1/1997), 90 environmental consents were given and 1 denied. In more than one third of the cases, amendments to Environmental impact reports or even changes of the projects were demanded. The possibility of using the ecosystem approach in vulnerability studies is under consideration.

Recommendation 3.3:

Set up a register of contaminated and derelict land and define measures to help re-use such sites. (See also Recommendation 6.5)

Up to now there are no inventories of contaminated land as such, as the need is not seen. There are inventories on municipal and industrial waste disposal sites, data on accidental spills, use of pesticides and groundwater pollution, pipelines, etc.

Recommendation 3.4:

Develop, for local authorities, (a) a framework to take energy efficiency and environmental features (including radon concentration) of buildings into account, and (b) legal provisions to ensure regular technical inspection of the existing housing stock, in particular heating and sanitary equipment. (See also Recommendation 13.10)

A new energy law was adopted in September, 1999, and entered into force in October. It sets the legal framework for the energy planning of local authorities through the preparation of local energy concepts. These are aiming at sustainable energy supply and include also measures for energy conservation of the public buildings. The Energy Law also allows for the introduction of energy certification of buildings. Radon concentrations are not subject to this law.

Recommendation 3.5:

Prepare guidelines for builders, architects and local authorities on training in reducing CO₂ emissions from buildings with a focus on thermal insulation, ecologically-oriented building, energy-saving measures, environmentally friendly demolition of buildings, and re-use of building material stemming from demolition.

The project enforcement of standards for buildings will not provide the guidelines but the recommendation for a standard instruction on how to obtain energy conservation in new and existing buildings.

Recommendation 3.6:

Prepare a strategy and a programme for modernising the building stock, taking into account energy-saving requirements as well as safety, hygiene and relevant environmental aspects. (See also Recommendation 11.3)

According to the new energy law, the National Energy Programme should be submitted to Parliament within 18 months. Regarding the building stock, the programme will provide only energy saving measures for buildings that can achieve savings of around 30 per cent. On the other hand, some other measures are already being implemented, like the energy advisory network, which started in 1992. It offers advice to households regarding energy saving measures in buildings and is free of charge. Saving energy in buildings was promoted since 1996, through several measures like financial incentives for small measures.

Chapter 4: Air Management

GENERAL TREND

Positive developments occurred in three directions. Firstly, a detailed programme was established for the desulphurization of power plants, involving realistic funding schemes. Secondly, fuel switches to natural gas and the adoption of stricter standards for light oils helped to reinforce the general downward trend of urban air pollution. At the same time, the expected increase in road traffic volumes is seen as a big threat to urban air quality. Cooperation between MEPP and the Ministry of Transport remained weak (but see 'General Features' in Chapter 12 below for new intentions). Thirdly, the monitoring network will be developed with the help of PHARE funds.

Recommendation 4.1:

Measures anticipating rising air pollution from future increases in the volume of road traffic should be prepared and taken. Monitoring of urban air pollution should be improved to provide a better assessment of urban air pollution problems in the preparation of such measures. (See also Recommendations 12.1, 13.3 and 13.4)

Implemented with the help of a PHARE project on the Improvement of the monitoring system of urban air pollution.

Recommendation 4.2:

Monitoring and data reporting of industrial emissions of air pollutants (including solid particulate matter) should be made more comprehensive and follow changes in the enterprise sector more closely. The project should include an action plan to ensure that industries comply with the monitoring and data collection requirements, and, if needed, some capacity building schemes for small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that have no monitoring capabilities and/or knowledge.

Not implemented, and problems with the procedures for the collection of emission data prevail. The implementation of the second part of the recommendation depends on EU Directives.

Recommendation 4.3:

Increases in the price of fuel for transport and of heat and electricity should follow an accelerated schedule; i.e. should be clearly above inflation rates. Public information campaigns and public debates should accompany the price rises.

Slovenia has up to now concentrated on the elimination of disparities of prices. It is felt that minor disparities continue to exist merely in household prices for electricity. The revision of the energy price system continues.

Recommendation 4.4:

Adopting EU practice, annual technical inspections of road motor vehicles should include the inspection of combustion performances and require adjustment and/or replacement of defective parts.

A new directive on technical inspection of vehicles is in preparation (planned to be adopted by mid-2000). It will be in accordance with directive EEC 96/96.

Recommendation 4.5:

Ratify the 1994 Sulphur Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and accede to the 1991 VOC Protocol, the 1988 NO_x Protocol and to the expected new NO_x protocol as soon as possible. (See also Recommendation 2)

Slovenia signed the New CLRTAP Protocol in Gothenburg in December.

Chapter 5: Water Resources Management and Water Quality Aspects

GENERAL TREND

The approval of the NEAP has given rise to a reorientation of water management programmes. The NEAP, which sets strategic guidelines, was implemented with lists of more detailed projects in an action plan for drainage and urban waste-water treatment, and in the area of water supply. These instruments made a continuation of the national "Danube strategy" redundant. The adoption of the Water Act continues to be postponed, the reasons probably being related to the organizational scheme for the Water Management Department. Regarding monitoring data and their use, problems continue to be felt with emission data. Slovene experts feel that the use of 'immission' data is adequate. On the whole, no progress was made on the development of a reliable information system, but some relief is expected from the planned advances in the integrated environmental information system.

Recommendation 5.1:

All legal instruments that are necessary for a full implementation of the provisions of the new 'Water Law' (expected to be enacted in 1997) should be developed with high priority. Establishing a national strategy on water management is a matter of priority. It should include measures to prevent and reduce pollution from point sources and diffuse sources.

The new water law is not yet adopted. The water information system is not implemented. NEAP and Strategy on Water Management are both strategic documents, which define main goals and activities like flood protection, water use and protection, conservation of the water environment. In accordance with the Environmental Protection Act, specific action plans should be prepared for these water sectors. An action plan for the implementation of the urban waste-water and drinking water directive was adopted by the Government in October 1999. The Action Plan for urban waste-water drainage and treatment, together with the programme of water supply projects defines specific activities and lists investment projects for the reduction of municipal point sources of pollution and for upgrading of water supply systems in a river basin perspective (according to the Framework Directive). Costs and sources of finance are specified in the plan of implementation, which is laid out for a 6-year period. In the near future, a similar action plan will be established for the reduction of diffuse pollution.

Recommendation 5.2:

The MoEPP should decide to extend the national water resource strategy (expected to be approved in 1997) into a comprehensive long-term water management programme, including specification of mechanisms for funding expenditures. The enforcement of all relevant legal instruments should be seen as indispensable in the implementation of the water resource strategy.

Action plan for urban waste water drainage and treatment with the programme for water supply projects defines specific activities, resources and priority investment projects for drinking water supply (see report on Recommendation 5.1). A new ordinance, adopted by the Slovenian Government this year, enables the charging of water prices covering the real costs.

Recommendation 5.3:

Water conservation measures should be defined with regard to both industrial and municipal water use. The setting of water prices at levels covering abstraction costs is a strategic objective in this connection.

The new Water Law is planned to be adopted by the end of 1999. It will specify obligations for water conservation. Closed circuits are increasingly used in industry.

Recommendation 5.4:

In the near future, the allocation of available funds to the upgrading of existing and the construction of new wastewater treatment facilities, which clearly improve treatment efficiency, should be given priority over alternative uses of funds.

The environmental fund is used for financing investments for protection of the environment. The forthcoming water law foresees the establishment of river basin funds, to finance investments at river basin levels that are defined in the NEAP. Funding of waste-water treatment plants is also forthcoming from EU sources.

Recommendation 5.5:

The regulation implementing effluent monitoring by polluters should be prepared and enforced with priority.

The regulation on emission monitoring was adopted in 1996. It is currently under revision (planned for finalization before the end of 1999), in order to adapt it to the EU Directives on qualifications of the institutions authorised for performing emission monitoring.

Recommendation 5.6:

Increased research funds should be allocated to the evaluation of water management practices as well as the formulation of alternative options. The Planning Division of the MoEPP should be put in a position enabling it to play the leading role in the specification of water management plans and related investment programmes. If the creation of a formal regional level of administration is impossible, the Water Management Department of the MoEPP should implement regional water management.

A new law on the organisation of state administration, which is in preparation, will define in detail the distribution of specific functions of water management at the different levels (state, river basin levels) and between the offices (authorities, agencies) involved.

Recommendation 5.7:

Monitoring activities (regarding 'immissions') should be systematically extended to cover all existing water-supply systems; not only the public supply systems.

A national programme for drinking water is prepared (in line with EU Directives), but it is not fully satisfactory. The problem is taking samples at the pipe.

Recommendation 5.8:

Monitoring data (regarding 'immissions') should be more extensively and systematically used in programme analysis and for the preparation of action plans.

Slovenia feels that the use of immission data is adequate, while emission data are lacking in quality and are not used as necessary.

Chapter 6: Waste Management

GENERAL TREND

Developments have been particularly dynamic in this field. New legislation has bridged the main gaps identified in the EPR report. The recommendations were basically matched also in the area of hazardous waste, which, according to Slovene experts, has been assessed a bit too pessimistically. The current legal situation is fully in line with EU practices. The implemented changes in general waste management and with regard to management of waste oil will be complemented, in 2000, by a decree on waste charges and a decree on landfilling. Management of packaging waste and of pollution of groundwater with toxic substances from landfills will be regulated in 2000/2001. The waste management strategy includes the objective of separation of waste at the source, but operational programmes have not yet been developed, a similar situation prevails with regard to recycling/reuse of waste. A delay will occur in the plans for waste incineration. The unsatisfactory state of waste statistics does not seem to improve in the near future.

Recommendation 6.1:

The legal instruments required for the implementation of the “Strategic Guidelines on Waste Management for the Republic of Slovenia” need to be enacted as soon as possible. Top priority should be given to economic and technical issues of hazardous waste management, separation of wastes at the source, waste reduction, and management of wastes in the farming sector.

The established legal framework consists primarily of the Environmental Protection Act of 1993, the Regulations on Waste Management and on Waste Oil Management (both of December 1998). The Regulation on Waste Disposal will be enacted before the end of 1999. The financial resources necessary for the implementation of strategic guidelines on waste management were available in 1998. In general, legal instruments are fully in line with the relevant EU directives.

Recommendation 6.2:

A plan for funding the measures foreseen in the waste strategy should be adopted, including specification of sources of funds, concessions and levels of charges for public waste management services.

MEPP, together with the Ministry of Finance is preparing taxes to be introduced with new waste disposal legislation, starting in the year 2000.

Recommendation 6.3:

The number and qualifications of human resources required to implement the waste management strategy should be assessed for both public administrations and industry.

Not done.

Recommendation 6.4:

The public acceptance of the location of waste incinerators should be solved through the application of the EIA procedure.

The EIA is intended to start at the end of year 2000.

Recommendation 6.5:

There is an urgent need to establish a regulatory framework for the location, construction, operation – including monitoring and restoration of existing municipal landfill sites - and decommissioning of municipal landfills for domestic waste, to cope with inadequacies of the present ones and the imminent development of new ones. The regulatory framework should also address the problems with illegal dumping sites. (See also Recommendation 3.3)

The legislation on landfill construction, operating and managing of existing as well as new municipal landfills will be enacted before the end of the year 2000. The intention is to close 54 existing landfills, which do not all correspond to existing norms. Sanitation plans will be established for those among them exhibiting problems. Problems with illegal dumping sites are not addressed.

Recommendation 6.6:

An adopted plan for the remediation of the storage sites of uranium mine tailings at Zirovski Vrh should be implemented, using the EIA procedure.

Due to scarcity of financial sources, the remediation process is in delay. As the request for remediation was made before the EIA law entered into force, the implementation of the EIA procedure (EIA report does exist) depends on agreement by company concerned.

Recommendation 6.7:

The markets for recycled wastes that are suitable for use should be developed, relying at least initially on the existing Waste Exchange.

Development of the recycling markets is currently in general entrusted to the regulation on waste management of 1998, and in detail as well to the regulation on waste oil management, as well as to regulations on management of other types of waste (packaging waste, end-of-life vehicles, biodegradable waste, etc.), which will be enacted in the year 2000.

Recommendation 6.8:

The installation of composting capacities should be accompanied by measures to develop the market for compost. (See also Recommendation 2.5)

Chapter 7: Nature Conservation, Forest and Biodiversity Management

GENERAL TREND

While the previous draft nature protection strategy has never been adopted, it greatly influenced the NEAP. The same can be said of the biodiversity strategy preparation – which is currently being adjourned because of other priorities in the accession process. The wetlands were not sufficiently recognized in the draft strategies, but in the meantime, the development of the wetland strategy, an obligation from the Ramsar Convention, has advanced well. On the whole, the present management strategy is to prepare an all-embracing Nature Conservation Programme that is scheduled for submission to Government at the end of 2000, and for adoption soon thereafter. Regarding area protection, Parliament has already agreed to increase the planned area from 20 to 30 per cent of the national territory, following public requests in the north-east of the country. The full programme is developed slowly, but the areas of (varying) protection have already been recognized in spatial plans. Progress was made in the development of parts of a nature information system. Data on protected areas, a national inventory of sites of nature conservation interest, and habitat maps are becoming available. Better species data is envisaged through intensified cooperation with scientific institutions and NGOs. Regarding coordination with other ministries, a breakthrough occurred between MEPP and the Ministry of Agriculture regarding nature protection requirements. The Ministry of Agriculture and also extension services increasingly take environmental protection requirements into account.

Recommendation 7.1:

The draft conservation act should be urgently finalized and adopted by Parliament. It should in particular focus on:

- (a) Filling in the current gaps in species and habitat protection inside and outside protected areas, and in particular in the karstic region;*
- (b) Restructuring the administration in charge of nature protection, redefining related task-sharing and coordination at the local, regional and national level;*
- (c) Coordinating the regional offices for the conservation of the natural heritage recently transferred to the MoEPP with administrative units in other ministries, such as those ensuring forestry, hunting and fishing management. (See also Recommendation 2.1)*

Recommendation 7.2:

Strengthen the management - and, thereby, the implementation of the relevant legal provisions - inter alia, in the various kinds of protected areas by setting up management authorities, individual or common depending on the size and importance of the site.

Recommendation 7.3:

Implementation of the existing plans for the expansion of protected areas to their optimal level (approximately 20 per cent of the national territory) should start, with full public participation.

The Nature Conservation Act was adopted on 30 June 1999 and is respecting (a) to (c). For a full implementation of the act, about 40 bylaws must be prepared and adopted, at governmental or ministerial levels, of which 5 are crucial because of related EU Directives.

The provisions in the Nature Conservation Act are addressing the setting up of the management authorities for all categories of the protected areas.

The full implementation of the planned expansion of the protected areas (to 30 per cent and not 20 per cent, following local requests in the northeastern part of the country) is set up in planning instruments. Technical and background discussion are taking place with local administrations and communities in the priority areas (e.g. Kočevska, Notranjska, Goričko). The Nature Conservation Act is a proper base for legal designations. However, establishing large protected areas requires good technical background and co-ordination with other economic sectors as well as with the local population. These actions depend on availability of sufficient manpower and financial means.

Recommendation 7.4

The National Wetlands Committee designated to apply the Ramsar Convention should act in such a way that:

- (a) The specific strategy requested under the Ramsar Convention becomes a part of the nature conservation strategy;*
- (b) A list of the endangered wetlands is drawn up and the Convention's provisions to increase the number of Ramsar protected sites are put into effect;*
- (c) Management plans for wetlands are set up, and a related administrative body is designated.*

The wetland strategy will be part of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. At the moment, the inventory of wetlands is in preparation (with financial support of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat). It will become the technical base for further protection of wetlands and possible listing of new Ramsar sites. In 1999, Skocjanske jame (karst underground wetland) became the second Slovene Ramsar site. A pilot management plan for Secoveljske soline (Ramsar Site) has been completed. With the adoption of the Nature Conservation Act, the area became state property. The governmental procedure is underway for designation at the state level. Management plans will be prepared following the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act and of Ramsar guidelines.

Recommendation 7.5:

The development of a national biodiversity strategy should be accelerated, taking into account the already adopted strategies for the protection of nature. The national strategy should be in line with the pan-European biodiversity strategy. (See also Recommendation 10.5)

Preparation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is still in process. Working groups, relating to the action themes of the Pan-European Biodiversity and Landscape Strategy were established in October 1999 starting with the preparation of the draft strategy. GEF funds enabling activities became effective in October 1999. The first national workshop for discussing the first draft is planned for June 2000; the draft of the Strategy will be completed during summer 2000; the second national workshop in September 2000; the final draft coordinated by sectors and submitted to government in December 2000.

Chapter 8: Integration of Economic and Environmental Decisions

GENERAL TREND

The implementation of the changes suggested in this chapter did not receive particular priority, but some progress was obtained through the approval of the NEAP, and in integrated environmental/economic reporting. Decentralization of budgetary allocation and authority to local administration remains problematic, but local administrations seem to have obtained a somewhat widened financial room for implementing environmental protection tasks. The problem ensuring actual environmental protection instruments corresponding to the related commitments made in the process of privatization continues to be unsolved, as the related regulation has still not been passed by Parliament. The management of the Eco-Fund remains unchanged. Its growing volume increases its weight among the funding sources for environmental improvements. The introduction of the CO₂ tax (originally motivated by its revenue raising potential) has not given rise to the systematic development of economic instruments as tools for environmental management. The issue continues to be considered as being the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance and the MEPP does not plan for decisive increases of its capabilities in this regard.

Recommendation 8.1:

The range of fundamental conceptual instruments steering environmental policy should soon be complemented with a strategy towards sustainable development, formulated on the basis of broad social consensus. The Strategy should cover national, regional and local development. It should integrate sectoral economic, environmental, social and spatial considerations.

Not implemented. At present, the focus in economic planning is on the coordination of economic, social and spatial aspects. Coordination with regard to environmental aspects is currently limited to the development of the methodology for strategic environmental impact assessment.

Recommendation 8.2:

The major governmental publications reporting on economic development should be extended to cover routinely issues of environmental management.

The Institute for Macroeconomics Analyses started to issue a monthly Economic Mirror where environment is included. The spring report started to cover the environment as well, through an assessment of the implementation of environmentally relevant targets and orientations of the strategy of economic development of Slovenia (SEDS). The SEDS itself includes orientations for environmentally sound economic development overall and in key sectors, and a particular chapter on environmental issues, seen in a development perspective. The SEDS for the period 2000-2006 will also project the financial framework for the implementation of NEAP priorities.

Recommendation 8.3:

Future increases in the resources of the MoEPP should in particular be allocated to the areas of coordination with industry, i.e. economic and related expertise should be seen as a priority.

Under development.

Recommendation 8.4:

A comprehensive tool-kit of economic and fiscal instruments for use in environmental management should be developed jointly by the MoEPP and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This work should also enable an informed decision on the future of the Eco-Fund, which should be assessed against other possible funding mechanisms for environmental protection.

A comprehensive system of economic instruments is under preparation.

Chapter 9: Introduction of Cleaner, Safer and Less Resource-Using Technologies in Industry**Recommendation 9.1:**

The full potential of voluntary agreements with industry should be used in order to maximize industry's actions to protect the environment. Environmental standards - in analogy with EU standards - should be set at such levels that they bring about measures to diminish pollution at the source, as well as reductions of inputs of raw materials and energy into industrial processes.

Study on effects and time schedule for implementation of the IPPC Directive was performed in co-operation with the EC. Substantial funds will be needed for restructuring and modernisation of production in certain existing installations in order to apply BAT. Therefore, not all the requirements of Directive 96/91/EC will be met by 30/9/2007. There are altogether 37 industrial companies covered by Annex I of Directive 96/91/EC. The necessary investments amount to EURO 400 million. Eighteen companies plan to comply with EU standards by 30/9/2011 at the latest.

Recommendation 9.2:

Technological improvement should be a priority criterion in the evaluation of sanitation plans or rehabilitation programmes, as well as in all relevant public tendering.

Priority to technological improvement is given in Ecofund tenders and in sanitation programmes of industry which have to be approved by MESP (i.e. restructuring of pulp industry from a chemical to a thermo-mechanical process in Krsko).

Recommendation 9.3:

The system of environmental charges and taxes should be extended to air pollution and waste generation. The charges and taxes should be set at a level that stimulates technological change leading to less pollution and to savings in the use of material inputs into production.

In cases of exemption of charges and taxes, the support goes directly to environmental investments. Special provisions do not yet exist for the evaluation of efficiency in other cases.

Recommendation 9.4:

The necessary regulations for eco-labelling and awards for achievements in environmental protection should be issued as a matter of priority, aiming at the introduction of EMAS at the earliest possible time. The standards of the ISO 14000 series should be adopted by the Institute for Quality and Metrics. The MoEPP should promote the actual introduction of environmental management systems.

ISO 14000 was awarded to 15 more companies during 1998, and about 50 are in preparation. Preference is given to tenderers with ISO 14000 certification in state tendering.

Recommendation 9.5:

A 'clean technologies information centre' should be created, preferably within the Chamber of Economy. Its main tasks would be to compile and disseminate - primarily to SMEs - information on cleaner technologies and help their introduction with supporting measures. Ways should be sought to facilitate the financing of environmentally friendly and possibly small investments that pay back over relatively short periods of time, primarily owing to their export potential to EU markets.

Discussion with UNIDO continues. Funds from state budget should be ensured next year.

Recommendation 9.6:

The introduction of closed water circuits in industrial establishments should be promoted.

Priority in public tenders by the Ecofund. Closed industrial circuits are increasing.

Chapter 10: Environmental Concerns in Agriculture

GENERAL TREND

Owing to the weight of the Common Agricultural Policy in the European Union, the Ministry of Agriculture was faced with a particular challenge in the accession process. The approach chosen consisted chiefly of a revision of the reform of agriculture that had been approved in 1993. Sustainability considerations constitute a significant part of the new reform, which will stand to be implemented in the year 2000. Plans foresee its completion in 2002. An important input into implementation derives from the Rural Development Plan. The Ministry of Agriculture also continues to extend its support to less favoured areas, a programme it manages alone, but the Code of Good Agricultural Practices is one of the bases for the programme. The extension service presently consists of 360 staff, including also staff with environmental expertise. On the whole, both the recognition of environmental concerns in agricultural legal instruments and practices, as well as the coordination between the MEPP and the Ministry of Agriculture appear to have improved substantially.

Recommendation 10.1:

The ecological function (as well as the impacts) of agriculture should be recognized in appropriate legal instruments, so that financial incentives can be offered for production systems that cause less environmental stress. The use of e.g. organic farming systems could be furthered in this connection, and should be labelled appropriately.

Owing to the importance of agriculture in the accession process, major changes were made with priority. Agriculture legislation was reformed in 1998, the national implementation programme of the reform was adopted in 1999, the draft law on agriculture is planned to be adopted before mid 2000, a rural development programme is to be based on the law and will include an agro-environmental programme. The programme will include sustainability objectives.

Recommendation 10.2:

The legal instruments for introducing eco-labelling and showing the registered designation of origin (AOC) for agricultural products should be created as a matter of urgency.

Labelling for organic farming is included in the draft law on Agriculture, but is already implemented for integrated production, mainly of fruits. Registered designation of origin is practiced for wine on the basis of the wine law, and is included in the draft law for agriculture for other products.

Recommendation 10.3:

The quality of groundwater in agricultural areas should be regularly monitored so as to detect agricultural sources of groundwater pollution.

A study for the definition of nitrate vulnerable zones is in preparation, which will include indication of agricultural sources. The code of good agricultural practice is expected to be issued end of 1999. There are no plans for changing the current arrangements for monitoring the quality of groundwater.

Recommendation 10.4:

In zones being protected for drinking-water abstraction, only permanent grassland should be allowed as agricultural land use, and its fertilization should be limited.

Partly implemented. New legislation is adopted for water protection areas, which has several protection categories, and limit values for fertilisation and other prohibition and limitation may be set (permanent grassland, etc.), particularly close to wells. Control on the spot does not exist.

Recommendation 10.5:

A comprehensive programme should be developed to support farms in agriculturally marginal areas, combining economic incentives with landscape and biodiversity preservation targets. The programme could be based on an adaptation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage Act, taking into account the requirements of the biodiversity strategy. (See also Recommendation 7.5)

The situation has changed. The natural and cultural heritage act is superseded by the nature protection act. There are no connections between the draft law on agriculture and the nature protection act regarding biodiversity. Agricultural biodiversity will be covered by the new law on agriculture. The programme for less favoured zones is being reshaped in accordance with EU practices. Environmentally sensitive areas will be included.

Chapter 11: Environmental Concerns in Energy

Recommendation 11.1:

Extend the development of the energy conservation programme to transport, with particular attention to the objectives of reducing NO_x and CO₂ emissions.

Recommendation 11.2:

The climate change issue should be fully included in the next revision of the energy, the energy conservation and the environmental policy programmes. The future roles of hydropower and other renewable forms of energy ought to be addressed in that context.

Recommendation 11.3:

Revise the thermal standards that are currently prescribed in the Building Code in order to bring them into line with best available technologies. The thus modified standards should to the extent possible be respected in programmes for retrofitting buildings with energy-saving structural improvements. (See also Recommendation 3.6)

Chapter 12: Environmental Concerns in Transport

GENERAL TREND

Since the EPR report appeared, a Resolution on Transport Policy was adopted, which became the renewed basis for transport policy. It sets main priorities in three directions: reduction of transport bottlenecks, increase of traffic safety (including environmental sub-goals), and reduction of the social impacts resulting from the opening of the transport market. The second of the basic targets deals also with noise problems and with the treatment/disposal of car wrecks, as well as with other externalities. In preparing the Resolution, the Ministry of Transport met two or three times for discussion with the MEPP. In the past, the Ministry of Transport was primarily responsible for the development of transport infrastructure, while responsibility for public transport was with local authorities. This basic scheme will remain valid, but the Ministry of Transport expects to become more involved in transport flow management, after the Resolution is adopted. An action plan will be prepared by the Ministry of Transport, which will also tackle the issue of coordination with the MEPP. Support to the development of public transport schemes and soft modes of transport will continue within the limits of responsibility and of available finance.

Recommendation 12.1:

Existing transport policy programmes should be reviewed systematically to specify measures to cope successfully with future increases in traffic volume. The programmes for urban transport policies should be able to benefit from information obtained from improved monitoring. (See also Recommendation 4.1)

All recommendations are enclosed in the Resolution on national transport policy, which deal primarily with problems of transport volume. The policy is in parliament and has not yet been adopted.

Recommendation 12.2:

A national policy plan for local, regional and long-distance public transport should be established, including a policy for a regionally balanced development of local public transport systems.

The preparation of the national development programme for the long-distance public bus transport started four years ago and will be concluded in 2000. In the short term, funds are available for public transport. In the medium term, a legal basis will be created to promote city transport plans. In the long term, the ministry of transport will continue to assist city administrations in the development of public transport, but the issue will remain a municipal responsibility.

Recommendation 12.3:

The work on guidelines for the integration of land-use and transport planning should be completed as a matter of urgency.

Included in transport action plan.

Recommendation 12.4:

The envisaged transport action plan should contain a comprehensive package of measures and instruments to curb private car use. Public transport, alternative transport modes, and the introduction of cleaner vehicles and fuels should be promoted. In particular, effective policies should reduce - or avoid an increase in - environmental pressure from traffic in large urban areas.

Fuel is expected to become more expensive. The issues raised in this recommendation can be implemented by local authorities, with the help of the ministry of finance.

Recommendation 12.5:

Available financial means should be used to a greater extent to the benefit of relatively more environmentally friendly modes of transport.

The transport action plan includes a specific reference to this issue.

Recommendation 12.6:

An increase in taxes together with other economic instruments such as road pricing schemes and the further grading of vehicle and fuel taxes in relation to their relative environmental impact should be introduced as quickly as possible.

No initiative taken as yet. Measures will be taken on the basis of proposals that are under preparation and will be addressed to the ministry of finance.

Chapter 13: Human Health and Environment

GENERAL TREND

Positive changes followed the adoption of new laws on drinking-water quality and traffic accidents. In this second case, a main focus was on accident prevention for children. Changes did not occur in risk assessment and management – an area, where the EPR chapter was used intensively, as it includes, for the first time in Slovenia, quantitative assessments of potential health risks. The problem of the relationships between health and environmental inspections continues to be unsolved, as the relevant directives have not been clarified. On the whole, Slovene experts feel that the situation is evolving slowly in the direction recommended.

Recommendation 13.1:

The national environmental health action plan should be used for harmonizing environmental health activities and for defining them more clearly.

The main purpose of NEHAP is to harmonise environmental health activities and to set priorities. Activities are clearly defined in it.

Recommendation 13.2:

National plans relevant to the promotion of environmental health programmes should include provisions for developing the capacities for assessing and reducing environmental health risk.

NEHAP requires development of the capacities for assessing and reducing environmental health risk. A group whose task is to assess environmental health risks was formed. EU methodology is going to be used for assessing environmental health risks. See also follow-up to Recommendation 13.1.

Recommendation 13.3:

Trends in NO₂ concentrations should be systematically evaluated, in order to assess the effects of increasing traffic on human health. (See also Recommendation 4.1)

Trends in morbidity and mortality due to exposure to NO₂ are starting to be evaluated with the new WHO-AirQ programme.

Recommendation 13.4:

The present monitoring of respirable particles (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) should be expanded to assess the health risk better. (See also Recommendation 4.1)

Monitoring of PM_{2.5} is still insufficient. Trends in morbidity and mortality due to exposure to PM₁₀ are starting to be evaluated with the new WHO-AirQ programme.

Recommendation 13.5:

The prevention of traffic accidents and the treatment of accident victims should receive highest priority.

A year ago, a new Law on Road safety was adopted with the aim to reduce traffic accidents. A number of new restrictions were enforced. On a national level, a National Programme on Prevention of Accidents for pre-school children was introduced. Its most important part deals with prevention of road accidents.

Recommendation 13.6:

A special survey should supplement the regular water quality monitoring to assess the conditions of individual water-supply systems and to estimate potential health risks.

A special survey on the quality of drinking water from individual water supply systems was carried out in some areas of the country. It proposed measures, and some of them were already taken. The survey will be extended to other parts of the country.

Recommendation 13.7:

The control of the quality of drinking water in supply systems that are either not, or insufficiently, monitored should be intensified as soon as possible.

The new drinking-water act includes requirements for monitoring frequency. The number of public water supply systems that are regularly controlled and water quality monitored is almost complete. The frequency of control and the number of checked parameters as required by the new Rules complies with the new EC Directive on drinking water.

Recommendation 13.8:

To improve unsatisfactory supply systems, investments in the water-supply system of Kranj should be given priority.

The water supply system of Kranj is not a problem any more. The supply of water from the system is sufficient and of good quality.

Recommendation 13.9:

A special assessment of the exposure of the population (especially children) to lead should be carried out in the region of Mezica to determine whether accumulated waste has caused health risks or health damage.

An assessment of exposure to lead in Mezica valley will be undertaken in the near future.

Recommendation 13.10:

Preventive measures should be taken to secure the foundations of new houses in radon-prone areas against radon inflow and accumulation so as to reduce the population's exposure. (See also Recommendation 3.4)
