

SGI Sustainable
Governance
Indicators

2014 Environment Report

Environmental Policy



Indicator

Environmental Policy

Question

How effectively does environmental policy protect and preserve the sustainability of natural resources and quality of the environment?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = Environmental policy effectively protects, preserves and enhances the sustainability of natural resources and quality of the environment.
- 8-6 = Environmental policy largely protects and preserves the sustainability of natural resources and quality of the environment.
- 5-3 = Environmental policy insufficiently protects and preserves the sustainability of natural resources and quality of the environment.
- 2-1 = Environmental policy has largely failed to protect and preserve the sustainability of natural resources and quality of the environment.

Estonia

Score 9

Environmental awareness have risen rapidly in the political sphere, partly because of the need to comply with standards of the EU and international organizations that Estonia joined after regaining independence. The Ministry of Environment articulated a vision of an integrated system of environmental protection that covers the entire country and ensures the preservation of a clean environment and sustainable use of natural resources. The challenge, however, is the national economy is still dependent on energy-heavy technologies. On the other hand, Estonia is sparsely populated and possesses significant natural resources – wetlands, forests, and protected areas for flora and fauna.

Regarding climate protection, Estonia has signed the Kyoto Protocol and implemented related tax and consumption regulations. Furthermore, its national program on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Output 2005 – 2012 also addresses climate change.

As far as water resources are concerned, Estonia has invested significantly in renovation and building of the water management infrastructure. As a result, water pollution has decreased and the quality of tap water has improved. However, most of the lakes and rivers are very small and, therefore, highly sensitive to any pollution whatsoever. According to recent estimates, the quality of about 26% of surface water is not good.

As for forest area, more than a half of Estonian land is covered by forest. The area covered by forests and the volume of forests have significantly increased in the last 50 years making it one of the biggest resources in Estonia, both in natural and economic terms. Seventy percent of the forests are commercial forests and the remaining third has been placed under different protection regimes. In terms of the proportion of protected forests, Estonia ranks 10th place in Europe. Two general objectives have been set for forest management: sustainability and effective management of forests.

Finally, looking at biodiversity, Estonia has a rich biological diversity, being home to a wide variety of wildlife species. To keep the population of its main species stable, the government regulates hunting through licensing and limits. All protected objects and species form a Natura 2000 network. About half of the Natura 2000 areas are wetlands and another half is dry land. Dry land protected areas cover about 17% of the Estonian mainland. One of the main risks for biodiversity is increasing traffic and road construction, though the newest roads have been constructed in accordance with environmental protection regulations. For example the first “ecoducts” will be open soon on the main national highways.

Citation:

The Environment Indicators of Estonia http://eelis.ic.envir.ee:88/seireveeb/envirind_avalik/index.php?l=en&t 1=AVALEHT

Latvia

Score 9

Environmental policy largely protects and preserves the sustainability of natural resources and the quality of the environment, as evidenced by Latvia's ranking as a top performer in the 2012 Environmental Performance Index produced by Yale and Columbia universities. Environmental health policy, air quality and biodiversity were identified as Latvia's strengths. Weaknesses remain in the areas of climate change, energy issues and water resources. Among 2011's environmental protection investments (with a total of LVL 98,505 million invested), the largest sums went into water infrastructure projects (LVL 50.373 million), greenhouse-gas emission reduction measures (LVL 25.8 million) and waste-management services (LVL 8.6 million).

The Climate Change Financial Instrument, funded through Latvia's participation in the International Emissions Trading Scheme, is the country's main policy instrument in the area of climate change. In 2011, a total of 1,428 projects worth LVL 56.57 million were approved in areas such as energy effectiveness, technology development for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, switching from fossil to renewable energy sources.

Latvia's Environmental Policy Strategy for 2009 – 2015 prioritizes policy interventions in Baltic Sea marine water quality and wastewater purification. In 2011, significant investments were made in wastewater purification plants (20 renovated, 10 newly built), the expansion of sewage networks (by 134 kilometers), water-supply-system improvements (26 systems reconstructed, two newly built) and the expansion of water -supply networks (125 kilometers). The proportion of residents provided with high-quality water (58.9%) and wastewater services (54.2%) has increased as a result.

Latvia is a heavily wooded country, with 2.9 million hectares (44.5% of the total area) of its territory forested, of which 50% is state-owned. The Latvian government is both regulator of the forest sector and the largest land owner – thus, it is the dominant economic actor in both respects. Protection of forests is well organized and secured through legislation, which regulates all related economic activities, including forest harvesting, forest management plans, forest regeneration and monitoring, and control of forest tree species. The economic crisis precipitated an increase in Latvia's logging quotas, and Latvian timber exports grew by over 50% in 2010 as compared to 2009, exporting over LVL 500 million (€714.2 million) worth, primarily to the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany. Logging practices by the state-owned forest company (Latvijas Valsts Meži, LVM) were deemed unsustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), leading to a loss of certification on July 16, 2010. Re-certification of several LVM management districts was achieved in 2012 and 2013.

Biodiversity in Latvia means coastal biodiversity, with unique brackish water ecological systems at the shore of the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga, as well as forest ecosystems and bogs and fens. Protected areas, including Natura 2000 territories, cover 11.9% of Latvia's territory. A law called On Protection of Species and Habitats also provides for the establishment of micro-reserves to protect small-scale but biologically valuable areas outside of protected territories. Over 2,000 micro-reserves had been established as of 2012.

Citation:

1. Yale University (2012), Environmental Performance Index Rankings, Available at: <http://epi.yale.edu/epi2012/rankings>, Full report: <http://epi.yale.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/2012-epi-full-report.pdf>, Last assessed: 20.05.2013
2. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (2011), Annual Public Report, Available at (in Latvian): http://www.varam.gov.lv/files/text/VARAM_2011_PublParsk.pdf, Last assessed: 20.05.2013
3. Forest Stewardship Council Database, Available at: <http://info.fsc.org/>
4. Convention on Biological Diversity, Latvia: Country Profile, Available at: <http://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/default.shtml?country=lv#status>, Last assessed: 20.05.2013

Switzerland

Score 9

In general, environmental policies in Switzerland were improved in 2011 – 2013. The most remarkable developments in recent years have been made through the integration of environmental protection and sustainability issues into a wide range of areas that both directly and indirectly concern environmental policy per se. Following the OECD's strategy of green growth, Switzerland has launched several studies aimed at reconciling the goals of sustainability and economic development. Furthermore, the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 saw Switzerland develop a number of cross-sectoral strategies focusing on issues including sustainability, biodiversity, climate-change adaptation and forest management. New guidelines for integrated water management were published in 2011, taking into consideration the use and protection of natural water sources.

In 2011, the federal government decided to phase out the use of nuclear power over the course of the next several decades. However, the ongoing international financial crisis has put pressure on conservation policies. As of the time of writing, the parliament was discussing policies that would weaken protections for nature conservation areas, and allow more aggressive exploration of hydropower resources.

Switzerland invests considerable sums in the area of environmental protection. For example, there are about 8,000 jobs related to protection of the environment at the federal level (500), the cantons (1,500) and the municipalities (6,000) combined. Public spending on environmental protection totaled 2.5% of total public expenditure in 2012. A new article (Article 84.2) was added to the constitution in 1994, stating: "Transalpine freight in border-to-border transit shall be transported by rail. The federal government shall take the necessary measures. Exceptions shall be permitted only if they are inevitable. They shall be specified by statute." This article has not yet been effectively implemented, but the country has made enormous investments in improved railway infrastructure, particularly with regard to transalpine freight.

In certain regards, the ecological challenges facing Swiss policymakers have been much less demanding than in other countries. Switzerland never developed significant smokestack industries, and industrialization took place as a decentralized process. Thus, Switzerland has no regions with large concentrations of industries with significant emissions. Nonetheless, the country's record is mixed in terms of environmental policy overall, as demonstrated by the following factors:

- Switzerland is ranked very highly internationally in terms of controlling water pollution, and has implemented significant environmental-protection measures as a part of its water-infrastructure planning.
- Air quality has improved over the past 25 years, but threshold values of ozone and other are frequently exceeded.
- Switzerland recently updated its national climate-change mitigation policy. A broad mix of voluntary, regulatory and market-based instruments are expected to produce a reduction in emissions through 2020.
- Considerable success has been achieved in the area of waste-management policy, especially with respect to hazardous waste. Furthermore, Switzerland's recycling rate is one of the highest worldwide.
- Little progress has been made with respect to controlling noise pollution, as 25% to 30% of the population remains exposed to high levels of noise from road and rail traffic.
- Soil protection has improved.
- Average to high levels of success have been achieved in the area of chemical-management policy.
- Policies seeking to prevent the release of hazardous materials into the environment have been very successful.
- There has been little success in terms of nature conservation and landscape protection. The number of animal and plant species that have become extinct or are at the risk of extinction continues to increase.

Denmark

Score 8

Denmark is considered a front-runner in environmental policies and is pressing for high environmental standards within the European Union. Much of Denmark's current policy is based on EU directives. Taking EU policy as standard – and it can of course be discussed whether EU standards are good enough – the data available on implementation suggest that Denmark is doing reasonably well on implementation. In 2012, there were 296 infringement cases in the European Union, six involving Denmark. But there were no Article 260 (previously Article 228) court cases against Denmark.

The latest OECD Environmental Performance Review for Denmark was published in 2008. It was somewhat mixed. On the one hand it stated, "the well-balanced environmental policies of Denmark have led to significant

environmental progress.” However, at the same time it stated, “further environmental progress is needed for health and economic reasons,” suggesting that further environmental improvements be reflected in the country’s transport, agriculture, energy sectors as well as fiscal policies.

The perception in Denmark is that the country is doing reasonably well. Asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with efforts to preserve the environment, 70% of Danes answered that they were satisfied, putting Denmark in fourth place among OECD countries. Denmark is doing relatively well when it comes to renewable energy, as 23.40% of energy consumption is renewable, which puts Denmark in eighth place among OECD countries. Water usage is relatively low in Denmark compared to other OECD countries. However, CO2 emissions remain relatively high, with the country ranking 26th among OECD countries. Nor is Denmark doing very well on biodiversity, with the country ranking 28th among OECD countries. Agriculture is one of the culprits.

The government has set rather ambitious goals including that Danish energy production should be fossil free by 2050. Several sub-targets have been set to reach this goal.

Citation:

Alberta M. Sbragia, “Environmental Policy: Economic Constraints and External Pressures,” in Helen Wallace and William Wallace (eds.), *Policy-Making in the European Union*. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 293-316.

EU, Statistics on environmental infringements, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/statistics.htm> (accessed 20 April 2013)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, PRESS STATEMENT, Copenhagen, 25 January 2008 Launch of the Environmental Performance Review of Denmark, By Mr. Lorents Lorentsen, Environment Directorate

Regeringens energi- og klimapolitiske mål, 2013, <http://www.kemin.dk/Documents/Presse/2012/Energiaftale/Faktaark%20%20energi%20og%20klimapolitiske%20mal.pdf>

Germany

Score 8

In recent years, there has been a change in focus in Germany from traditional regulatory policies to new environmental policies such as eco-taxes, tradable permits and environmental agreements. German environmental policy is embedded in and influenced by the European framework; however, Germany has established itself as a pioneer and market driver in the fields of renewable energy, offshore-wind farms, cogeneration, and the energy-efficient redevelopment of buildings and other infrastructure. In the latest Environmental Performance Index, Germany is considered to be a “strong performer,” achieving a score of 66.91. With a rank of 11th place worldwide in the survey, Germany trailed the lowest “strongest performer” by a margin of just 1.91 points, but fell almost 10 points

behind Switzerland, the leading country (cf. Environmental Performance Index 2012).

The Fukushima meltdown in 2011, the largest nuclear disaster since the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, resulted in a controversial change in environmental policies. In May 2011, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that nuclear power would be phased out by the end of 2022, completely reversing her previous policy. Although the decision was welcomed by the public, certain questions remain unanswered. Long-term radioactive waste storage remains a challenge to public authorities, and the costs from the consequent changeover in the energy mix, the financing of the much-needed grid expansion and additional renewable-energy subsidies will result in ballooning energy costs for consumers in the medium run. In addition, it is highly plausible that the phase-out will result in a higher share of fossil fuels in the country's energy mix, making it more difficult for the country to achieve its CO₂ emissions goals.

This policy change will over time add new difficulties to an already mixed environmental-policy picture. While environmental concerns have been among the top issues of Germany's policy agenda in recent years, policymakers have in some cases failed to align measures implemented with market incentives. The extremely expensive subsidies provided to renewable-energy producers represent one such example. In this case, the Renewable Energy Act (Erneuerbare Energien Gesetz, EEG) has guaranteed fixed prices for renewable-energy suppliers over a long-term investment horizon. The EEG, in addition to its distorting effects on prices, is highly discriminatory between different types of renewables. In particular, the EEG heavily promotes and subsidizes photovoltaic electricity production, which is extremely expensive in comparison to other renewable energy sources.

However, the European trading system for industrial-carbon emissions permits, which is both in place and working, offers a comparative success story. Its introduction, despite its myriad complexities and difficulties, has without doubt been a fundamental step toward a market-oriented strategy for reducing externalities. The energy tax, which is an indirect tax on the consumption of fossil and renewable fuels, is also driven by market principles.

However, the government faces a multitude of powerful pressure groups such as the automobile and energy industries that have sought to influence environmental policies. New pressure groups have also emerged representing the interests of newly created policy beneficiaries, such as the solar-energy industries that benefit from the massive subsidies for renewable energies.

Lithuania

Score 8

The performance of Lithuania's environmental policies vary significantly across sector. Lithuania's energy intensity is more than twice the EU average, with the residential-housing sector being particularly energy-inefficient. Progress toward a low-carbon economy is limited in most sectors of the economy, and CO₂ emissions per capita are still relatively high. Water-supply and sewage infrastructure has benefited substantially over the years through the application of EU structural funds, but providing adequate connections to the public water supply still remains a challenge in some cases.

Moreover, there are deficiencies in the treatment of wastewater, with significant differences evident between rural and urban areas. The country's treatment of forests is much stronger, with Lithuania topping the 2012 Environmental Performance Index's forest category due to strong results in the areas of forest cover, growing stock and forest loss. With respect to biodiversity, Lithuania's protected areas cover 15.6% of the country's territory, but only 22% of habitat types and 54% of the protected species in Lithuania are subject to preservation efforts, according to European Commission reports. Separately, 94% of the country's municipal waste continues to go to landfills, with just 4% of waste recycled. Infrastructure for waste sorting and recycling has not yet been developed, and most non-hazardous waste is disposed of in landfills.

Citation:

The Article 17 EU Habitats Directive Reports available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/knowledge/rep_habitats/

The Environmental Protection Index is available at http://epi.yale.edu/epi2012/country_profiles

Norway

Score 8

Norwegian public opinion is highly sensitive to environmental issues and the government regularly promotes international cooperation on environmental issues. There is a wide range of laws regulating various aspects of environmental policy and the use of natural resources, including specific laws on building regulations, pollution controls, wildlife and freshwater fish, municipal health, environmental protection and motorized vehicles.

Norway share of renewable-resource use is among the world's highest. Air and water quality are among the best in the world, largely due to the country's low population density and the fact that Norway's main energy source is hydroelectric power, which is in turn due to the natural abundance

of water in the country. Less positively, Norway does not have a good record on waste management, and has received international criticism for its policy concerning whale hunting. In addition, energy demand and usage per capita are higher in Norway than in the rest of Europe. This is partly attributable to a legacy of inexpensive energy, a factor that international energy markets have now made a thing of the past. The government is committed to energy efficiency. To this end, conservation standards for new buildings have been tightened, and new taxes have been added to the use of electricity and gasoline. However, there is significant scope for improvement in this area.

Moreover, Norway is a major oil and gas producer, and it is therefore directly and indirectly contributing to increased global CO₂ emissions. The government's plans for achieving its climate goals have sparked national and international controversy. The intention is to rely strongly on the purchase of international CO₂ quotas to a degree that appears to be beyond what is acceptable by EU standards (to which Norway is committed despite not being an EU member itself). In the course of this plan, it has been involved in projects to save forest land in Africa, Asia and South America. Environmental groups have criticized the country for attempting to buy its way out of the problem rather than enacting appropriate and lasting economic and organizational reforms.

Research performed by government-owned companies has led to pioneering technological innovations aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating CO₂ emissions associated with gas exploitation, focusing on the storage of CO₂ in the seabed. These initiatives are currently moving from the research to the large-scale experimentation stage.

Sweden

Score 8

As is the case with global social injustice, Sweden tries to be a forerunner in environmental policy as well.

Environmental policy made its way onto the political agenda in the 1970s and has remained a salient set of issues. With its legacy as a high-energy consuming industrial economy, Sweden has a long way to go, but the data suggest its environmental policy is working. Indeed, CO₂ emissions are decreasing, bio-diversity is improving and its ecological footprint, while still high, is slowly decreasing. Moreover, the government is gradually shifting towards an increase in "green taxes." In addition, environmental policy is an integrated component of the larger project of restructuring the economy and making it more environmentally friendly. It is also noteworthy that the Green Party, as a pivotal party in parliament during the period under review, was working to strengthen environmental policies considerably. Nevertheless,

Sweden's continued use of nuclear energy is still a highly contested issue, as discussed in the 2011 report.

United Kingdom

Score 8

Environmental policy is close to the heart of both partners in the coalition government, and the government promised a wide range of action to protect and preserve the sustainability of natural resources and the quality of the environment. It set itself the goal of becoming "the greenest government ever."

In many areas, the new government could build on the previous government's initiatives – for example, in introducing market-based mechanisms to environmental policy – but also on a planning system that had endeavored to preserve and protect "green belts" around major conurbations. Plans by the Labour government to build "eco towns" as new models for sustainable living (with low carbon emissions, renewable energy, expansive green space, high recycling rates etc.), however, were scaled back substantially in spending cuts.

Much environmental policy is determined by the European Union (e.g., the Water Framework Directive or the Biodiversity Agenda) beyond which there is little space for nationally specific initiatives.

Czech Republic

Score 7

As the repercussions of the global economic crisis hit the Czech Republic in 2009, preference was given to strengthening industry and agriculture over environmental policy. As a result, active policies towards the environment are overwhelmingly influenced, and very often funded, by the European Union. Public spending on environmental protection in the Czech Republic has risen and is now close to the EU average of 1% of GDP. The largest part of the spending is allocated for clean air, followed by water and biodiversity protection. The volume of EU funding grew significantly from 2006, reaching €800 million in 2013. An important step towards closing gaps in environmental legislation was taken in late 2011 with the adoption of the Clean Air Act, which introduced gradually rising fines for enterprises that pollute. In November 2012, a program titled New Green Light was introduced, which consisted of subsidies for buildings with improved energy efficiency. The secondary role assigned to environmental policy by the Nečas government is documented by the fact that the prime minister's party suggested merging the Ministry for Environmental Protection with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2012.

Finland

Score 7

Finland faces specific environmental challenges in terms of climate change and population, yet the country's contribution to larger efforts in combating climate change have so far been modest. Water pollution is another large issue. While pollution emissions from large industrial facilities have been to a large extent successfully curbed, and while polluted lakes and rivers have been cleaned, waterborne nutrient emissions that are generated by farms remain a pressing problem. According to calculations, some 1,500 lakes are in need of more active restoration measures to combat eutrophication. Finland's most valuable natural resource is its forests, the management of which is of vital importance for sustainable economic development. Thankfully, the overall annual growth rate of trees in the forests exceeds the total timber harvest, a result of well-planned institutionalized protections. Separately, efforts to halt an ongoing decline in biodiversity have by and large proved insufficient; the government has however created networks of protected areas.

Ireland

Score 7

Climate Policy:

A carbon tax was introduced in 2010. Early in 2013, the government published a draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill. Bearing in mind that Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions amount to only about 0.1% of the global total, policy in this area is largely symbolic. However, Ireland has exercised leverage on European environmental policy. It has been among the first in the European Union to introduce and increase a carbon tax and push for the re-calibration of tax applied to cars and other vehicles to reflect their emissions performance. A commitment to producing up to 40% of the country's energy from renewable sources is being implemented, relying heavily on the construction of wind farms.

Steps are being taken to protect renewable water resources in two relevant areas: under the terms of the Troika agreement, water metering on all residences is to be introduced by 2014 and measures are belatedly being taken to tackle violations of ground water directives by inspection of septic tanks in rural areas. Most residences in Ireland do not have water meters and the installation of meters will be a major challenge.

Significant grants for increasing the proportion of the territory under forestry have been in place for some time. The state-owned forestry service operates

forests that now cover about 7% of the country's land area. The privatization of the harvesting of some of these forests was recommended in the Troika agreement but now seems likely to be postponed in response to concerns about the potentially adverse effects on the amenity value of these lands assets.

Ireland is broadly compliant with EU directives on biodiversity and in enforcing measures to protect wildlife and flora. An extensive rural environmental protection scheme has sought to encourage farming in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner.

Citation:

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2013

<http://www.environ.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,32468,en.pdf>

Israel

Score 7

Israel faces significant environmental challenges due to its small territory, high population density and poor water resources. This situation has been aggravated by geopolitical developments. For one thing, unlike many OECD countries, Israel's complicated relationship with its neighboring countries prevents it from sharing power facilities and thus reducing environmental costs. Security and political considerations have overshadowed environmental issues, resulting in long-term neglect of environmental policy. However, since 2003, the country has increased its attention to the area, with some positive results. A 2011 OECD report surveyed the country's achievements and shortcomings, with the following conclusions:

- Climate policy represents Israel's main challenge. Since Israel has not been bound to international climate treaties, it has not done enough to decrease greenhouse-gas emissions and pollution. In 2009, it established its own goal of reducing emissions by 20% by the year 2020; however, the OECD deems this goal to be too modest, with plans insufficiently developed, and with details too hazy to allow for efficient regulation and enforcement. Another positive initiative has been the Clean Air Act passed in 2008 and implemented in 2011, which sets standards for industrial pollutant emissions, waste dumping, and other such issues. Although the government has sought to use taxation and price mechanisms to provide incentives for energy use reductions, the state has not done enough to offer viable alternatives. This is especially evident regarding transportation. Although Israel taxes private-car owners at the time of purchase and through highway tolls, it has done little to create a viable and stable public transportation system.
- Access to sufficient water resources are a key issue underlying long-term environmental sustainability. Scientists and politicians alike note that Israel's

natural fresh-water reserves will ultimately be unable to support Israel's growing population. Driven additionally by years of drought and rising water prices, Israeli scientists has been driven to develop new solutions to this problem. In the last decade, Israel has developed desalination facilities, sewage treatment procedures and infrastructure, and efficient irrigation techniques, among other innovations. These have become front-line technologies recognized around the world, used to a somewhat lower (but sufficient) degree in Israel itself. However, Israel has considerable room for improvement with respect to regulation and prevention of water pollution. Over the last six years, an increasing number of waterway rehabilitation programs have been implemented, and this remains an active and hotly debated issue.

- Israel's approach to preserving forest areas is systematic and effective, but could be improved by more systematic and transparent information gathering. According to 2010 report, Israel's wooded area makes up 8.9% of its total land, and some 10% of its open rural area. Most of this land is declared as preserved, and is largely supervised by governmental authorities such as the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael – Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF). Wooded areas in Israel receive various degrees of protection, the highest being achieved when a design plan has been legally approved. In 2010, the KKL-JNF submitted some 197 plans, which as of the time of writing were in different stages of approval. The country's forest law (1926) is the legislative mechanism governing forest management, and has been updated as recently as January 2012.

- Although Israel has a relatively small territory, its geographical diversity supports impressive biodiversity. In 2006, Israel established a communal program called HaMarag which promotes cooperation between the government's main environmental bodies, including the KKL-JNF, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. This program helps promote biodiversity, gather information and develop policy solutions. In 2010, it launched a monitoring system for dealing with biodiversity issues, aiming to utilize economic incentives to promote biodiversity protection and advancement. This represented a change from the older model of protecting specific species or lands. Instead, the aim is to take a larger view, and propose comprehensive actions with greater ability to protect wildlife and plants. In 2012, the program launched its new national plan for monitoring biodiversity in Israel.

Citation:

Berg, Naama, Orit Ginzburg & Avi Provolotzky, "National plan for monitoring the status of nature and biodiversity in open territories in Israel," Ecology and environment 3.3 (2012), 256-262 (Hebrew)

"HaMarag - National plan for monitoring the status of nature and biodiversity in open territories in Israel," HaMarag website (Hebrew)

"The forest law: current form" (hebrew)

Ha-hiron promkin, Tamar & Israel Tauber, "Status of nature report 2010" (March 2011) (Hebrew)

"The clean air act," Ministry of environmental protection website (Hebrew)

"What is the forest law?," Kakal website (Hebrew)

"OECD environmental performance review of Israel assessment and recommendations chapter," OECD, 31.5.2011 (Translated to Hebrew)

"Environmental performances report: Israel 2011 - Main findings," OECD (Hebrew)

Slovenia

Score 7

Slovenia enjoys extraordinarily rich biodiversity and landscapes due to its location at the junction of several ecological regions. The country's natural endowment has been enhanced by a tradition of close-to-natural forest management and by low-intensity farming. Forests occupy approximately 62% of the total land area, about twice the OECD average. The key mechanism for defining sustainable development goals and targets has been Slovenia's Development Strategy (SDS) for 2005 – 2013. In addition, various ministries have produced sectoral strategic documents, although mostly without exploiting potential synergies and trade-offs. Over the last decade, Slovenia has established a comprehensive framework of primary environmental legislation. It has transposed most EU environmental directives into the 2004 Environmental Protection Act and other national laws. In the period under review, Slovenia also adopted new or revised environmental quality and emission standards and made good progress in creating a multi-tier system of environmental permit granting. It has introduced risk-based planning of environmental inspections and improved compliance monitoring and enforcement. In parallel with these developments, Slovenia improved the provision of, and access to, environmental information. Environmental NGOs fulfill an important watchdog role, participate actively in environmental policymaking, and play a role in environmental management – e.g., the management of nature reserves. However, as in many countries, the legal basis enabling NGOs to challenge government decisions in the courts could be strengthened. While gross expenditure on R&D for environmental purposes has more than tripled in real terms in the last decade, the country's environmental innovation system has produced relatively little output.

Citation:

OECD, 2012: Environmental Performance Review Slovenia. Paris. (<http://www.oecd.org/slovenia/slovenia2012.htm>)

Austria

Score 6

Austria's government has sought to establish a policy course balancing economic growth and protection of the environment. In reality, this is very often seen as a contradiction. Environmental policies may have significant effects for employment and even for economic growth in the long run, but in

the short run – and the Austrian government, like any democratic government, is first and foremost focused on short-term effects – traditional economic incentives are given priority most of the time, at the cost of environmental protection.

However, this has changed little by little in recent decades, as public opinion has slowly accepted the need for environmental protection. Ecological values have been embraced by virtually all political parties, not just the Greens, and as long as protecting the environment is not in immediate conflict with economic growth, the government has promoted environmental policies. But the ambiguity remains, as well as a tendency to think within traditional frameworks that favor economic growth over environment protection.

In part for this reason, Austria is one of the very few EU countries that has failed to meet the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol. More recently, government decisions regulating harmful pesticides made it clear that the environmental ministry's priority was to protect the chemical industry more so than the environment. This policy led to significant debate within Austrian political circles.

A significant share of CO₂ emissions in Austria (27% in 2012, taking second place behind industrial emissions) is due to vehicle traffic. Indeed, CO₂ emissions related to vehicle traffic increased by 60% between 1990 and 2012. This increase in CO₂ emissions is overwhelmingly due to the rise in goods transportation, which accounted for 42% of vehicle-traffic CO₂ emissions in 2010. A total of 30.5% of vehicle-traffic CO₂ emissions are due to the export of fossil fuels (defined as transit traffic and “petrol-station tourism” by non-Austrians). Partly due to EU laws (the so-called Eurovignette directive), and partly due to the failure to make railroads a more attractive way to transport goods, Austria has completely failed to decrease vehicle-traffic CO₂ emissions.

Industry and commerce are responsible for the second-highest increase in total CO₂ production, and remain the largest contributor to CO₂ emissions in full. Economic growth and cheap carbon-market certificates for CO₂ can be seen as the principal reasons for the increase in CO₂ emissions in this sector. In part due to strong lobbying by economic actors, the Austrian government has failed to control the supply and prices of tradable CO₂ certificates, contributing to a significant fall in certificate prices.

Belgium

Score 6

Following a general trend in Europe, carbon emissions have largely decreased since the start of the economic crisis; emissions in Belgium in 2011 resulting from the consumption of energy fell to their lowest level since 1993. This may have come about from a change in the country's structure of production, in particular the decline of heavy industry, and is reflected in the decline of total industrial production overall. The main driver of the decline in environmental pollution is, however, not strong political involvement in environmental policies.

Car traffic is unlikely to decrease, partly due to poor management of public transport projects (a regional express train, initially planned for completion in 2012, has been postponed to 2025), and partly due to the state's inability to internalize the externalities of car and truck transport (a dispute between regions over road tolls has not been resolved). The country's highways do not require tolls and congestion in the major cities remains high (Brussels ranks as the tenth most-congested European city out of 59, and the third most-congested EU capital, after Paris and Rome), according to the Tomtom congestion index, with an annual 101 hours of delay for individuals with a 30-minute commute.

There remains the recurring temptation to increase highway capacity around the capital Brussels. What's more, a large shopping center (Uplace) is planned just outside the capital, next to the most-congested part of the highway that surrounds the city.

Electricity production largely hinges on nuclear energy (52% in 2011) and a 2003 law proposing a transition away from nuclear energy was rejected in 2009. Accounting methods have made this mode of energy production cost-free for producing firms (through accelerated depreciation of capital), which allows the state to broadly tax it. Still, in 2013, the tax on "nuclear rent" was reduced from €550 million to €475 million due to the closure of two of the oldest nuclear reactors for security reasons. The budgetary dependence on nuclear energy makes the transition to renewable energy sources politically sensitive. Whether these plants will be restarted and whether other older plants will continue to fulfill security requirements will determine the importance of this tax in the future.

Significant improvements in water treatment have been recorded in all regions (the implementation of which has become a regional prerogative), even though Belgium still lags behind its European obligations. One main improvement was the opening of a third water-cleaning plant near Brussels in 2008, which treats 100% of the city's wastewater. In general, Belgium's

complex institutional structure makes environmental policies difficult to manage.

An OECD report from 2011 suggests the “...need for reviewing the division of environmental responsibilities to reduce the costs of lack of coordination and harmonization of policies. In particular, renewable energy would be better promoted by merging the green certificate markets. Water policies would also be more efficient if organized by river basins and not by regions, and with better internalizing pollution costs in water charges.”

Regions as well are now responsible for maintaining forests and biodiversity. Overall, forest management is proactive, with a view toward long-term sustainability. Some superficial attention is being given to biodiversity efforts, such as through policies of planting bush fences along open fields, cutting grass along public roads and taking care of riverside areas; yet there is of yet no coordinated or ambitious policy in this regard.

Bulgaria

Score 6

Given the heavy damage to the environment inherited from the socialist economy, the overriding priority of environmental policy in Bulgaria over the last two decades has been to reduce pollution. Issues such as climate policy, renewable water resources, forest policy and biodiversity have been put on the agenda by EU initiatives.

Bulgaria's CO₂ emissions per capita are relatively low and might further decrease with improvements in energy efficiency, so climate policy has concentrated on subsidizing renewable energy, especially solar and wind. As for renewable water resources, governance largely rests at the level of municipalities, creating problems of coordination and strategy development. A further strategic problem in this area arises from the fact that much of the renewable water resources in Bulgaria also affect neighboring countries (Romania, Turkey, Greece), requiring international coordination. Bulgaria still does not have a clear water resource strategy.

Forests in Bulgaria are either private, municipal or state property. This fact impedes the development and implementation of coordinated forestry policy actions. However, the size of forest areas in Bulgaria is above the world average and, more importantly, has grown over the last two decades. This indicates that the existing model is performing relatively well and possibly needs incremental adjustments.

In terms of biodiversity policies, Bulgaria is an active participant in Natura 2000, the European Union's largest network for preserving biodiversity. With

approximately a quarter of its territory dedicated to Natura 2000, Bulgaria is significantly above the average for the European Union. As opposed to many other issues, there is an active civil society sector for biodiversity and nature preservation which is capable of applying political pressure and achieving results.

France

Score 6

France has a poor performance record with respect to environmental targets. Its good performance on carbon emissions is due to the importance in France of nuclear power, whereas other areas related to energy efficiency, such as insulation technology, have been neglected. Environmental policies have continued to be subordinated to sectoral policies which are considered more important. When economic interests and environment protections clash, economic interests tend to prevail. Environmental interest groups and government ministries (although established comparatively early) do not play a decisive role in policymaking. Former President Sarkozy, who launched an ambitious environmental plan, later considerably downgraded his ambitions. Even at the time of writing, when the government coalition is comprised of Socialists and Greens, the influence of the latter is minimal. Lobbyists and pressure groups in favor of the status quo or of the interests of the economic sector are much more influential. Environmental requirements are rarely perceived as an incentive for innovation but instead only as a source of additional costs.

The French policy in favor of environmental concerns has to be seen within this tension. For instance, of the focus on nuclear energy puts the country in a favorable position as far as carbon production is concerned, but the choice of diesel oil rather than gas implies a considerable excess in particle emissions. In many large cities, France does not reach relevant targets established by the European Union.

The same contrast is observable in the field of renewable water resources. In principle, France supports a water policy and has set up water agencies to monitor the use and protection of its water resources. However, the French authorities have been unable to resist the agriculture lobby, which is the largest consumer of water. This plays out in the southwest of France, where the intensive production of corn jeopardizes regional resources, and even more in Brittany, where surface water (the main resource in that region) is highly polluted by intensive pork and poultry production. Despite condemnations by the courts and the EU commission, the government has been reluctant and unable to tackle the problem properly. Rivers and the sea are affected by the excessive proliferation of toxic seaweed. The situation is much better with forests (their surface is growing) and biodiversity. In this

latter case, it must be noted that the protection of biodiversity has met resistance in metropolitan France by many diverging interests (agriculture, construction and transportation). Thanks to France's vast and essentially wild territories overseas in Guyana and in the Pacific zone, the results regarding ecological indicators are slightly better than they would be if only the European space was considered. While forests are growing, a result of the drastic reduction of farming and of cultivated land, the maintenance of these new wild areas is insufficient despite a long tradition of care by specialized engineers whose profession was established by French monarchs.

Hungary

Score 6

In Hungary, comprehensive environmental regulations are in place, and the European Union continues to serve as an important push factor. However, the enforcement of environmental standards has suffered from the country's tight budgetary situation. Moreover, the integration of the former Ministry of the Environment and of Water into the Ministry of Rural Development, one of the super-ministries of the Fidesz government, has reduced the political weight and independence of environmental policy. The government under Prime Minister Orbán has neglected the issue of arsenic in the country's drinking water.

Iceland

Score 6

Environmental policy has not been a high priority on Iceland's political agenda through the years. The Ministry of the Environment was established comparatively late, in 1990. The left-wing government of 2009 – 2013 renamed the ministry the Ministry of Environment and Resources. The country is rich in energy and water resources on land, and has substantial sea fisheries. However, there has been little discussion over the years over means of preserving these energy and water resources, reflecting an apparently rather widespread belief that these resources are essentially unlimited.

In early 2013, a significant political step was taken to address the country's nature and natural resources. First, parliament passed a new act (Lög um Náttúruvernd No. 60), that strengthened many of the country's environmental protection regulations. Second, parliament passed a resolution implementing aspects of the Master Plan for Hydro and Geothermal Energy Resources in Iceland 1999 – 2010 (Rammaáætlun). This process had been initiated by the government in 1999 on a scientific, impartial basis; it was not dominated by narrowly based or biased interests, and was open to democratic public

involvement and scrutiny. The resolution stipulated which hydropower and geothermal resources could be used for power production. However, a less-environment-friendly government has now come to power, and the recent years' emphasis on environmental policy could be reversed.

Many consider the most serious environmental problem facing Iceland to be the long-standing erosion of its soil. Despite repeated calls for government action to stop the erosion, livestock – sheep and horses – remain free to roam around the countryside, causing great damage to the natural environment. This is why large swaths of Iceland's countryside are grey rather than green. The unwillingness of the government to fence in the sheep and horses in part reflects the disproportionate political power of farmers, even though the rural population accounts for only 6% of Iceland's total population.

The constitutional bill that was approved by national referendum in 2012 but was not passed by the parliament contained strong provisions concerning the protection of the environment, reflecting greater popular interest in and awareness of environmental issues.

Citation:

Althing. Taken 17. May 2013 from the link http://www.Althing.is/pdf/Althing2011_enska.pdf

Law on nature protection (Lög um náttúruvernd) 2013 nr. 60 10. apríl.

Vernd og orkunýting landsvæða (rammaáætlun) 89. mál þingsályktunartillaga þál. 13/141 141. löggjafarþingi 2012—2013.

Constitutional Bill (2012), <http://www.thjodaratkvaedi.is/2012/en/proposals.html>

Japan

Score 6

Japan was a global leader in terms of antipollution policy and energy conservation in the 1970s and 1980s, partially due to technological progress and the forceful implementation of relevant policy programs, and partially due to the overseas relocation of polluting industries. More recently, Japan has been faced by two major concerns: first, how to contribute to the global reduction of CO₂ emissions, and second, how to improve the energy mix of the domestic economy.

The triple 3/11 disaster led to some policy rethinking with respect to nuclear energy. In 2010, the DPJ-led government had decided to raise the share of the country's electricity generation produced by nuclear power from 30% to 50%. In the aftermath of 3/11, activists as well as some politicians including then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan called for a total exit from nuclear power. However, subsequent governments did not subscribe to such a radical approach, and today it appears that nuclear energy will remain an important part of the overall energy mix for the foreseeable future. In 2011, policymakers decided to improve the feed-in tariff system, with the aim of

promoting photovoltaic energy generation. Japan's share of sustainable energy generation today remains quite low.

Greenhouse gas emissions have risen again since the 2008 – 2009 global recession. Nominally, they are above the 1990 Kyoto Conference baseline, but are below this level if forest carbon-sink measures are considered. In the areas of industry and transport, Japan has made progress in recent years, but some improvements may have come from the further move of GHG-intensive activities abroad.

Japan has made great progress in terms of waste-water management in recent decades, following a series of disastrous incidents in the 1960s and 1970s. Today the country has one of the world's best tap-water systems, for example. Usage of water for energy production is limited for geographical reasons.

The country has a proactive forestry policy, and in 2011 passed both the Fundamental Plan of Forest and Forestry and a National Forest Plan. The devastation caused by 3/11 in northeastern Japan has led to further emphasis on forest-support measures.

Japan's biodiversity is not particularly rich compared with other advanced countries. However, the country has in recent years taken a proactive stance under its National Biodiversity Strategy, and has also supported other countries in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Luxembourg

Score 6

Luxembourg has during the period focused efforts toward protecting water resources and curbing emissions with a series of governmental measures that have helped improve conditions. However, efforts such as reducing carbon emissions caused partly by the phenomenon of "fuel tourism" – cross-border commuters that benefit from lower fuel prices – and the progressive improvement of the water quality of rivers and lakes need to be continued. Luxembourg's pledge per the Kyoto Protocol to reduce carbon emissions by 28% by 2012 has been hampered by tax revenues from fuel tourism, which has led to high carbon emissions and the negation of emissions policies. Also, the country's dynamic economic growth has also been cited as a reason for increasing carbon emissions.

Luxembourg claims the highest energy consumption per capita, the highest vehicle density and renewal rate of passenger cars (14.3%) in Europe.

What's more, according to EU environmental statistics, at 2.1% Luxembourg also claims the lowest share of consumption of renewable resources and only 36% of the country's wastewater is treated in modern triple-phase sewage treatment plants. In 2011, the government was condemned for a second time by the European Court of Justice for "failing in its obligation to treat and dispose of urban waste water." Although Luxembourg committed to the OECD Pesticide Risk Reduction Project, it was not implemented until 2012. Moreover, public transport in the country has to be reinforced in the context of an overall policy on sustainable mobility.

Luxembourg has significant ground water resources, but only 7% of its rivers and streams are in a "good" state. As of 2011, Luxembourg is the European "champion" in landscape fragmentation, fostering concerns over the country's biodiversity, with many animal and plant species regarded as in danger of extinction. In 2012, about 34% of the 1,323 native flowering plants, around 54% of mammals and 24% of breeding birds were considered at risk.

Although the country's per capita water consumption has decreased, in comparison to average use in the European Union, levels are still high. Moreover, with 687 kilograms of waste per year per person (2011), Luxembourg's waste volume is one of the highest in the OECD (OECD average: 540 kilograms).

The country's environmental policy thus faces some major challenges. Programs during the period and looking forward include: issues surrounding the country's high recovery and recycling rate; new assessments of environmental sustainability questions; the achievement of sustainable protected forests reserves; monitoring nature conservation programs; the enlargement of energy counseling; a decrease in average per capita water consumption; the reduction of tax-privileged mileage allowances; and the implementation of an indicator-based biodiversity monitoring framework.

Citation:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-DK-11-001/EN/KS-DK-11-001-EN.PDF
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-1273_en.htm
http://apis.lu/files/Dossier_MECO_FUAL.pdf
<http://www.greng.lu/sites/greng/files/20120709-PK%20Sauer-Waasser-Velo-final%20.pdf>
<http://www.wort.lu/de/view/luxemburg-tut-sich-schwer-mit-dem-gewaesserschutz-5109ec4fe4b04af8b813ce57>
http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/dossiers/pndd_2010/PNDD.pdf
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http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/dossiers/pndd_2010/PNDD.pdf
<http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/luxembourg/2012/PDF-18-12.pdf>
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-DK-11-001/EN/KS-DK-11-001-EN.PDF
<http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/luxembourg/2012/PDF-18-12.pdf>
http://www.environnement.public.lu/conserv_nature/biodiv/de/luxembourg/

New Zealand

Score 6

The performance of New Zealand's environmental policy is mixed, but improving. In the latest Environmental Performance Index of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy (Yale University) and the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) (Columbia University) for 2012, the country ranked fourteenth of 132, but this should not detract from the fact that it holds only an average overall position in the group of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Major environmental problems stem from New Zealand's particular type of economy, with its strong reliance on agricultural production. Areas of concern include water usage and management and greenhouse gas emissions, with a number of government initiatives enacted during the period under review, such as a reformed Emissions Trading Scheme and a national policy for regulating freshwater management (an area which previously was nearly completely devolved to regional water boards). Deforestation, in contrast, is much less a concern, as logging in indigenous forests on public land has ceased and on privately owned land, can only be carried out with a permit. Finally, biodiversity is an area in which all recent governments have been quite active. Due to New Zealand's isolated location, its biodiversity is one of the most varied in the world, with a high percentage of vulnerable endemic species. Due to the public's interest in and attention to environmental issues (made even more acute by disasters such as the grounding of container ship *Rena* in October 2011) but also due to the Memorandum of Understanding the current National Party minority government has with the Green Party, environmental policy is a policy area that is relatively high on the government agenda. Organizationally, the most important development has been the establishment of the Environmental Protection Authority, which has begun work as a major regulator in managing nationally significant proposals under the Resource Management Act, regulating hazardous substances and new organisms, handling the administration of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme, and managing the regulation of ozone-depleting substances and hazardous waste.

Citation:

Environmental Performance Index 2012 (Yale/Columbia: Yale University/Columbia University 2012).

Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.govt.nz/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed May 11, 2013).

Poland

Score 6

Poland has enshrined the principle of sustainable development in Article 5 of its constitution and has broadly adopted EU environmental standards. However, there is a broad political consensus in the country that economic growth should enjoy priority over the protection of the environment. Governments have been especially keen on protecting the domestic coal industry, which is a large employer and reduces the country's dependence on Russian energy. With the coal industry in mind, the Tusk government has tried to obstruct any attempts by the European Union to tighten targets for the reduction of carbon emissions. Poland has also been fined by the European Commission for failing to implement the renewable energy directive by treating timber as a renewable energy. Further controversies have been raised by the government's emphasis on, and its liberal approach toward, the exploration and production of shale gas and its plan to build a nuclear power station.

United States

Score 6

The United States has had ambitious environmental programs since the early 1970s. By the 1990s, major enactments covered the entire range of significant environmental concerns— including water resources, wetlands, endangered species, and protection of forests. In some areas, such as hazardous waste management and new sources of air pollution, environmental controls have imposed excessive costs. The issue of climate change, however, is unlike any previous environmental issue. Effective action requires imposing costly controls for the sake of benefits that will occur years or even decades in the future and that will affect the rest of the world as much as the United States itself. In this context, the public has responded to objections that developing countries, especially China and India, are not doing their fair share in reducing the growth of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In spring 2013, only 42% of the American public said that average temperatures on earth have been getting warmer for the past few decades and that it has been mostly because of human activity.

President Obama, in both his 2008 and his 2012 election campaigns, promised to make effective action on climate change a major priority. In 2009 – 2010, when he enjoyed Democratic majorities (and for a short period a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate), he pushed for a major cap-and-trade bill, but the measure failed in the Senate. Nevertheless, a number of constructive developments have occurred. The Environmental Protection Agency has imposed several major measures – including increased fuel-economy standards for cars and light trucks, and carbon standards for new

coal plants. At the same time, about 30 states have passed laws requiring greater use of renewable energy by electric power plants. In addition, California has established its own cap-and-trade policy. Most importantly, recent sharp declines in the cost of natural gas have reduced the use of coal, with significant reduction in GHG emissions. Remarkably, despite the failure to enact cap-and-trade, the United States is on pace to cut carbon emissions an estimated 16.3% by 2020, consistent with international expectations.

Australia

Score 5

Australia's economy is based to a considerable extent on the exploitation of natural resources and on a resource-intense mode of agricultural production and exportation. Therefore, the trade-off between environmental concerns and economic growth is a hot issue in politics and a topic of great public debate.

Environmental policy at the federal level is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, established in 2007. The department has the responsibility for the conservation of the environment, as well as the responsibility for protecting Australian territory in the Antarctic. There are also parallel departments and agencies in all of the states and territories with similar environmental policy responsibilities within their own jurisdictions. Environmental policy in Australia has focused very much in recent years on climate change and water security. However, Australia continues to promote a lifestyle that is not sustainable. Energy consumption is generally high and, despite great potential for solar and wind energy, the contribution of renewable energy to the grid has declined since the 1970s, an exception in the OECD. Furthermore, since 1971, CO₂ emissions have almost tripled in Australia, again one of the worst performances in the OECD.

Australia has, however, taken positive steps with respect to climate change. In 2007, the government established a federal Department of Climate Change charged specifically with mitigating the effects of climate change. In December 2008, the government proposed legislation to introduce a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, a cap and trade system, but the bill was defeated in the upper house, the Senate, in December 2009. However, following the 2010 election, legislation was passed to introduce a carbon tax of \$23 per ton. The tax took effect in July 2012 and Australia will transition to an emissions trading scheme in July 2015. During the 2013 election campaign, the carbon tax became a major issue, with the Coalition promising to abolish the tax.

Concerning the country's scarce water resources, restrictions on urban water use are common and several states have built desalination plants in recent years. There has been a great deal of policy attention on achieving more sustainable and efficient agricultural use of water in the Murray-Darling Basin, the predominant source of water for agriculture in Australia. However, satisfactory resolution of differences between the four states affected has not been achieved to date.

The Australian, state and territory governments are all signatories to the 1992 National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS). The NFPS provides the framework within which the governments work cooperatively to achieve sustainable management of Australia's forests. In addition, in November 2012 the Australian Parliament passed the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012, which makes it a crime to import illegally logged timber into the Australian market and to process timber that has been illegally harvested in Australia.

Finally, biodiversity decline is a significant concern in Australia, with considerable evidence of acceleration in decline in recent decades. In response to this concern, in October 2010, the Australian government released "Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010 –2030," a report that provides the guiding framework for conserving Australia's biodiversity over that period. Various policies to address the decline in biodiversity have been implemented, though more action is required.

Citation:

Australian Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, 'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030', 2010: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy-2010-30/pubs/biodiversity-strategy-2010.pdf>

Canada

Score 5

The most important recent development in the environmental arena in Canada was the federal government's 2012 passage of Bill C-38, the omnibus budget implementation bill, a measure that included extensive changes to the country's environmental laws. The government's stated rationale for these changes was to update and modernize environmental legislation so as to provide a more appropriate balance between the dual societal objectives of environmental protection and economic development. Bill C-38 eliminated the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, replacing it with a new law by the same name that reduced the stringency of the federal environmental-assessment process and limited the scope for public involvement. Environmentalists argue that the government has set up a minimalist environmental-assessment process in which final decisions can be made by politicians with arbitrary and discretionary power, declaring any

adverse effects “justifiable in the circumstances.” Moreover, critics say, such decisions can now be made in the absence of public accountability, and be made the subject of Cabinet secrecy. They argue that a clear pattern has developed in which habitat-protection measures, which have often existed in law for years, are removed so as to enable the development of energy projects and pipelines.

Climate-change policy has been extremely controversial in Canada. Many observers argue that the federal government has not seriously addressed the issue of global warming and greenhouse gas emissions. Unlike the government of British Columbia, the federal government has not introduced a carbon tax, and unlike the government of Ontario, it has not developed a comprehensive strategy for renewable energy. Indeed, Bill C-38 included a repeal of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act.

Bill C-38 also had a number of implications for renewable water resources. The fish-habitat provisions of the Fisheries Act were changed to protect only fish of “commercial, aboriginal, and recreational” value, and even those habitat protections were weakened. Federal protection of over 95% of Canada’s lakes and rivers was eliminated under the new Navigable Waters Protection Act, and pipelines and power lines were exempted from the provisions of the act. Bill C-38 additionally had implications for biodiversity through amendments to the Species at Risk Act that relieve the National Energy Board of the duty to impose critical-habitat-protection conditions on projects it approves. In addition, companies no longer have to periodically renew permits on projects that threaten critical habitats.

Citation:

Theresa McClenaghan (2012) “Bill C-38: Federal Budget Bill 2012 Implications for Federal Environmental Law” Canadian Environmental Law Association, June. <http://www.cela.ca/sites/cela.ca/files/Bill-C-38-Federal-Budget-Bill-Review-and-Implications.pdf>

Croatia

Score 5

Environmental policy in Croatia has been strongly shaped by Croatia’s accession to the European Union. According to the National Strategic Reference Framework, which guides the use of EU Structural and Cohesion Fund money, Croatia is to spend almost €10 billion on waste management, water management and air protection – the three most important environmental issues in the EU accession negotiations – by 2023. However, the implementation of the envisaged measures has progressed slowly both under the Kosor and the Milanović governments. Croatia has not even started to establish regional waste management centers at county level, and is unlikely to meet its commitment in the accession negotiations to reduce its

very large share of biodegradable waste (some two thirds of the total waste transported to landfills) substantially by the end of 2013.

Netherlands

Score 5

Environmental policy is no longer a big issue among the public in the Netherlands. According to a 2011 Eurobarometer study, only about half of the population supports a progressive environmental policy (addressing climate change, sustainable energy policy). Climate skepticism has a voice in the States General through the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD) and the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV). Although the Dutch government speaks the language of sustainable growth, this is largely rhetoric, because old-fashioned growth of GDP and jobs clearly have priority over the other sustainability criteria regarding environmental and social concerns.

Climate

Climate mitigation (CO₂ reduction) no longer has priority; there is a clear shift to climate adaptation which also appears manageable because any adverse developments in the Netherlands will be gradual. For example, the high upstream buffering capacity and water management governance in Germany allows the Dutch to deal effectively with peak discharges of Rhine river water. In addition, there is an early detection system for returning and emerging human diseases and agricultural/animal pests due to rapidly increasing worldwide trade and transport.

Renewable water resources

The recent Delta Program dealt with climate risks and the associated risks and uncertainties on flood safety, freshwater availability and urban development.

Forest Area and Biodiversity

These are more or less neglected aspects of climate change. Plans for expanding the National Ecological Network in order to protect and enhance biodiversity have been abandoned or toned down. Nature conservation policy has been subjected to financial cutbacks and farmers' economic interests by policies of the Rutte-Verhagen (Rutte I) government.

Citation:

EC, DG Communicatie (2011), Nationaal Rapport Eurobarometer Nederland (www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_nl_nat.pdf)
PBL (2013), the effects of climate change in the Netherlands: 2012 (www.pbl.nl/publications/the-effects-of-climate-change-in-the-netherlands)

Portugal

Score 5

There is legislation to protect the environment. However, once again, the current government is so focused on hard economic realities that in the overall scale of things, the environment is not considered a political priority. And although the government has failed to implement adequate policies to mitigate climate change, ensure renewable water sources, and protect forest areas and biodiversity, the reduction in production resulting from the economic crisis has eased the pressures placed on the environment.

Romania

Score 5

The rapid process of deindustrialization in post-communist Romania has contributed to a dramatic decline in greenhouse gas emissions and to a noticeable improvement in air and water quality. These structural changes were complemented by a number of regulatory initiatives meant to promote environmentally responsible behavior, such as an incentive program to retire old automobiles and the imposition of a variety of environmental taxes on cars (most recently in March 2013). On the other hand, however, Romania's Environmental Fund (EF) – designated to sustain and develop environmental protection projects – remains an opaque source of financing prone to improprieties and rent-seeking.

After 1990 Romania ratified the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity. Moreover, as an EU member, the country has an obligation to maintain and protect its flora and fauna and defend against disasters and natural accidents. A positive development with respect to environmental protection is the ongoing transposition of existing EU environmental regulations into domestic laws. However, implementation and enforcement has been weak, largely because of the poor integration of Rio convention priorities into EU-related reforms and due to the poor coordination between different ministries and agencies at the national and regional/local level. Some progress was made in conjunction with a UNDP project aimed at achieving better policy coordination, but the sustainability of this progress after the completion of the project in mid-2012 is questionable.

One of the main challenges for environmental policy in Romania has been the inability of successive governments to stop the massive illegal deforestation that has amounted to over 370,000 hectares of forest since 1990. The Romanian government has recently announced a new set of measures to remotely detect illegal deforestation and to increase and enforce penalties for companies and state employees involved in illegal logging schemes.

Slovakia

Score
value_6

Slovakia is a country with considerable natural resources. However, interest groups and policymakers have traditionally assigned priority to economic growth rather than the protection of the environment. Although NGOs have raised attention for environmental issues and although EU accession has brought the obligation to meet the European Union's strict environmental standards, this negative legacy is still present in policymaking. As a result, both governments' approach to environmental issues has tended to be patchy rather than holistic. Neither the Radičová nor the Fico government have updated Slovakia's 1993 Environment Strategy or developed an environmental strategy focusing on Slovak priorities rather than on the mere compliance of EU requirements. A second major problem has been the weak implementation of environmental laws and regulations.

Citation:

OECD, 2011: Environmental Performance Review Slovak Republic. Paris. (<http://www.oecd.org/env/country-reviews/slovakrepublic2011.htm>)

South Korea

Score 5

Environmental policies are currently insufficient to protect the environment or to preserve the sustainability of resources. In the last two years, contradictory trends have emerged in Korean environmental policies. On the one hand, the current Lee administration has put "green growth" at the center of its agenda, and environmental policies have entered the political mainstream. The government is strongly supporting new technologies and is helping Korean companies to develop "green" products such as hybrid and electrical vehicles or LED-based lighting and displays. On the other hand, much of this so-called green growth can be seen as simply a new name for industrial and infrastructure policies.

A considerable amount of the investment associated with the drive has been earmarked for the environmentally very controversial Four Rivers Project, which includes the construction of artificial waterways and dams. Huge amounts of public funds are also being used to develop, build and export new nuclear power plants. Korea is one of the few countries that are dramatically expanding nuclear power even after the 2011 Fukushima catastrophe.

The Seoul government has expanded bike paths, although most of these paths are planned for recreational use and will thus reduce commuter traffic

only marginally. Public transportation is also steadily improving, with new subway lines and an airport high-speed railway connection under construction. Korea also has a high level of recycling. However, in many other areas conservation efforts are stalling. In mobility concepts, priority is still given to cars, many Korean buildings are badly insulated, and the government is subsidizing energy use. Since 2010, the government has launched an effort to reduce over-heating in the winter and over-cooling in the summer, which seems to work in public buildings and transportation, but has so far not led to more ecological lifestyles in general.

Chile

Score 4

Chile is a country with an efficient but scarcely restrictive environmental regulatory system, and from 2010 onwards, it has boasted a modern environmental institutional system. For example, the former National Commission for Environmental Issues (Comisión Nacional del Medio Ambiente) has been upgraded into the Ministry of Environment (Ministerio del Medio Ambiente). Nevertheless, the creation and implementation of complementary institutions, such as environmental tribunals (Tribunales Ambientales) and a chairperson of the environment (Superintendencia Ambiental), has come to a standstill. However, Chilean environmental policy is basically designed for compliance with standards required by international markets and thus does not necessarily focus on aspects like ecological sustainability. In addition, Chilean environmental policy is also exposed to major domestic political pressures from the industrial sector, especially in the field of water and forestry policies and regulation. This is often clashes with the protection, preservation and sustainability of natural resources and the quality of the environment. It is quite common for the judiciary to stop investments and projects due to the lack of adequate ecological sustainability.

Cyprus

Score 4

Environmental issues took a place on the public agenda in the late 1980s, initially through opposition to tourist development, which had negative effects on many aspects of life including the environment. However, the country still lacks a comprehensive environmental policy, and faces the danger of being fined for failure to meet EU obligations. Ministerial responsibilities are highly fragmented, information on the issue is incomplete, and administrative coordination is insufficient, all factors that contribute to the country's slow pace of progress. The creation of environmental information centers has

been promoted with the aim of raising citizen awareness of the issue.

The country's response to the demands of climate protection has been insufficient in many respects. Exploitation of solar energy has remained a low priority, and progress in renewable-resource use has been very slow. High levels of energy consumption and a lack of public transportation contribute to rising CO₂ emission levels. Thus, available data show a very low renewable-energy share and large volumes of CO₂ emissions and waste, placing Cyprus near the bottom of the 41 SGI countries in terms of environmental policy. The country has not met time-limited obligations to contain emissions and create the infrastructure for efficient waste management.

Water is a problem for Cyprus, an island, in various ways: Supply is heavily dependent on rainfall, and the country depends in part on desalination. Waste water is insufficiently exploited, as most rural areas lack sewage systems. Drilling for water without permit has been widespread, which has led to over-pumping. Authorities at all levels must do more to promote water conservation and sustainable management.

Forest protection is governed by a national program for the 2010 – 2020 period, which aims at reforestation and the limitation of fire hazards. Other measures seek to protect forests from pollution and other hazards caused by visitors. Various areas have been included in the Natura 2000 project, including the Akamas peninsula, which is slated to become a national park. However, reactions on the part of neighboring communities and land owners have caused long delays with respect to project decisions and implementation.

In December 2012, on the occasion of its European Council presidency, Cyprus presented its strategic plan for biodiversity policy through 2020. This is another area where policy gaps and a deficient implementation of plans and regulatory enforcement has been noted. In 2010, a study by Yale University on environmental performance ranked Cyprus last among 30 European countries. By the end of 2012, it appeared that no progress had been achieved in the intervening time. The government has not effectively promoted the protection of the Natura 2000 areas or measures aimed at protecting ecosystems and flora and fauna. Land development is one of the main causes of ecosystem destruction, but remains frequently promoted in ostensibly protected zones. Hunting is one of the threats against protected species, in particular trapping with nets and other illegal practices. Environmental groups criticize politicians for being tolerant of practices threatening biodiversity for the sake of votes, while authorities have failed to implement decisions and measures designed to protect the environment.

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Greece

Score 4

Greece is blessed with an attractive mediterranean climate and has many pockets of biodiversity, but has never formulated, let alone implemented, a sustainable environmental policy. While compared to the rest of OECD nations Greece's CO₂ emissions are average and its energy intensity rather low, its ecological footprint is surprisingly large for a country that is nowadays clearly de-industrialized and has never been an industrial power. Unchecked urban development, large infrastructural works and negligent consumer behavior have probably had a negative impact on the country's natural environment.

Indeed, in Greece economic development in tourism and agriculture has often proceeded in a haphazard manner and always took priority over environmental concerns. Environmental NGOs were only nominally consulted by the Ministry of Environment, Town Planning and Public Works (YPEXODE). In fact, public works and town planning always took precedence over environmental protection. The result was that none of the four targets of environmental protection – climate, renewable water sources, forest area biodiversity – were ever sought in a systematic fashion. Of course, as an EU member state, Greece benefits from EU environmental policy and in fact it is compelled to respect this policy by being periodically brought to the courts and fined for not implementing EU legislation – e.g., regarding waste management. In this respect, Greece has an “imported” environmental policy which serves as a substitute for its own environmental policy failure.

Forest management is haphazard, too, subject to the vicissitudes of changing political leaderships and interests, but it is also vulnerable to fires, some of which are started deliberately for planning reasons. Moreover, Greece has struggled to develop a land registry or inventory of land ownership to determine responsibility and control. Again, the crisis has negatively affected Greece's ability to manage any aspect of environmental policy.

Italy

Score 4

Italy was not an early mover in the field of environmental policies compared to other European and OECD countries, but in a number of aspects its environmental record has significantly improved. For instance, Italy ranks above the mean in its performances for CO₂ emissions in comparison to GDP, and the percentage of renewable sources in its overall energy mix. In the field of renewable energies, where Italy traditionally fared reasonably well thanks to its large hydroelectric (and geothermic) plants, the promotion of new sources such as solar or wind energy has been very effective in recent years thanks to generous incentives. Because of budgetary constraints under the Monti government (and in part also because of other conflicting environmental reasons such as protection of the landscape) these incentives have been reduced but by now the percentage of these sources has reached an important level. The government has also provided incentives for sustainable house building and house renovations. An initial discussion about the return to nuclear energy with the purpose of further reducing CO₂ emissions was stopped by the Fukushima disaster.

Forest area has been growing significantly in recent years and biodiversity is above the European mean.

In other dimensions, such as water efficiency and waste management, Italy fares less well. In these fields disparities between northern and central Italy on the one side and southern Italy on the other remain significant. In environmental policy the decentralization efforts of the last 15 years show that southern Italy does not achieve national standards in waste management. Some emergencies in Naples, Palermo and other southern towns demonstrate the low performance of local and regional authorities in environmental matters. The absence of purification plants compromise large parts of the coast line and rivers. Erosion, flood and earthquake prevention should be a high priority for the government.

Italy has among the highest numbers of cars per capita in the world, and this combines with poor short-, medium- and long-haul public transport to make life in cities difficult. It also compromises the transport of goods and persons across Italy. Smog, particulate matter, poor air quality and traffic jams undermine the quality of life significantly in Italian towns. Erosion is a danger in many parts of Italy. Perhaps more so than any other policy area, the environment demands a stronger strategy and corresponding political action, as Italy is dropping back on the European but also global level for quality of life.

Malta

Score 4

As an EU member state, Malta is bound to fulfill key climate targets within the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy yet must find it hard to achieve these targets. In its 2012 country-specific recommendations, the European Council stated that “energy supply in Malta remains almost entirely dependent on imported oil, while the contribution of renewable energy sources continues to be marginal. High electricity tariffs may hamper the competitiveness of its small and medium-sized enterprises. Addressing shortcomings in energy efficiency could bring the double benefit of improving competitiveness and achieving energy and climate targets. A number of initiatives have been undertaken such as encouraging the generation of photovoltaic power and developing wind farms, building an electricity inter-connector with Sicily and promoting the use of fuel-efficient cars. However, it is still too early to see the eventual impact of those initiatives so their implementation needs to be closely monitored.”

Fresh water is a scarce resource in Malta, yet until recently the government’s approach to this important issue was spotty and in general inadequate to protect the island’s water reserves. The production of water for domestic and commercial use is heavily dependent on reverse osmosis plants. In 2011, the Malta Environmental & Planning Authority (MEPA) launched the first national Water Catchment Management Plan with the aim of establishing a framework for regulatory measures required in this area. A principal concern of the plan is the considerable pressure that is put on Malta’s scarce water resources. For this reason, a €56 million national flood relief project is being implemented with the aim of increasing the amount of water collected from 300,000 cubic meters to 1 million cubic meters. This is supplemented by the increased monitoring of groundwater extraction.

The Maltese countryside is protected from unsustainable development through a regulatory process of permits and enforcement. Moreover, the National Environment Policy launched in 2012 emphasizes the need to use land more efficiently. Malta’s land is used 51% by agricultural projects, 22.3% by urban development and 18.3% by natural vegetation.

The government has introduced various policies to preserve Malta’s biodiversity, as the small island is home to a “varied and interesting array of habitats and hosts endemic, indigenous, and migratory species,” as stated in the National Environment Policy. Yet Malta’s biodiversity continues to be threatened through land development, invasive species, overexploitation of species and climate change. The policy outlines measures aimed to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020. These include the compiling of a dedicated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the creation of additional

marine protected areas and strengthening the management of existing protected areas.

Citation:

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Mexico

Score 4

Mexico is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and has shown every sign of taking environment policy seriously. However, it needs to do so, because it has some very real environmental problems. The provision of clean water to Mexico City, air pollution in the capital, and deforestation in rural Mexico are some of the largest challenges. Helping the Mexican authorities is a marked decrease in population growth. While environmental policy has become more sophisticated, particularly in Mexico City and other major cities, the enforcement of environmental standards and regulations is often lacking. Many companies do not comply with existing regulations. Despite an increasing awareness among the broader – and particularly younger – population about environmental challenges, public pressure is very weak compared to many other OECD countries.

Spain

Score 4

Despite some positive trends (mainly because of the crisis, which has reduced energy consumption, limited construction work and has prevented further littoral destruction), the current Spanish environmental policy cannot guarantee completely the sustainability of nature and the quality of the environment.

Concerning climate, energy and air pollution, a report released by the World Wildlife Fund shows a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions since 2008, although those emissions are not yet within the maximum threshold allowed by the Kyoto Protocol (118.68% against the 115% permitted) and may increase again if the economy reactivates in the future. A law decree passed

in January 2012 terminated – at least temporarily – the economic incentives for renewable energies, changing the path followed in previous years and jeopardizing the leadership gained by Spain in solar and wind energies (the new government seems to prefer a pricing policy aimed at encouraging energy saving in a country extremely dependent on external supply). Air quality is still a huge problem mainly in big capitals, such as Madrid and Barcelona – both currently at risk of being sanctioned by the European Union for violating pollution limits. Finally, recycling has improved, showing an increase from 21% in 2001 to 33% in 2010, but Spain is still far off target and will have to make an extra effort to meet the 50% target of the Waste Framework Directive of the European Union by 2020.

Regarding water resources, the situation is better but thanks to considerable rainfall since 2009 (despite a dry winter in 2012) the government has been able to postpone the extremely controversial transfers of water between different basin areas or the building of very expensive desalination plants that were included in the different hydrological national plans of previous decades.

With regard to the protection of natural resources and biodiversity, the assessment is mixed. On the one hand, the reform of the 1988 Sea Coast Law (Ley de Costas) intends to deregulate coastal activities and, thus, restart construction pressures on the coast. On the other hand, the 15th national park (Cumbres del Guadarrama in the provinces of Madrid and Segovia) was launched in 2013, continuing the trend of better safeguards for wildlife ecosystems. Furthermore, and despite public spending cuts, the fight against forest fires has become increasingly professionalized to the extent that Spain is now a global reference country in the prevention of this type of fire thanks to the Forestry Service of the regional autonomous communities and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.

Citation:

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Turkey

Score 4

Sustainable development policies began to be important in Turkey as part of the EU accession process, inspiring steps toward environmental policy and legislation. Even though considerable progress has been made toward emissions controls, the use of renewable energy and promulgation of energy efficiency, improvements in waste management and the expansion of water and waste water services, the 2012 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) still ranks Turkey as 109th out of 132 countries. The country's dynamic

economic growth together with unplanned urbanization and a high birth rate threatens its environmental sustainability.

Turkey has ratified the Kyoto Protocol and the 2009 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. In addition, the government adopted a number of environmental plans, including: the Wastewater Treatment Action Plan (2008 – 2012) to build wastewater treatment facilities; the National Rural Development Strategy and Rural Development Plan (2010 – 2013) to improve the working and living conditions of rural people; the Energy Efficiency Strategy Document (2012 – 2023) to strengthen energy supplies and reduce dependency on energy imports; the National Climate Change Strategy (2010 – 2020) to foster sustainable domestic development policies; and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP, 2011 – 2023) to limit greenhouse gases.

The government extended the country's biodiversity nature protection areas, with the rate of protected areas rising to 5.05% (as of 2008) compared to 3.02% in 1992. Forestation plans continued apace, with total forestland increasing from 20.7 million hectares in 1997 to 21.6 million hectares as of 2011. Turkey reduced its greenhouse gas emissions about 20% from 1990 to 2007, while during the same period GDP increased 171%. Additionally the government, under the Drinking Water and Sewer Infrastructure Program (SUKAP), increased the percentage of the municipal population that accesses and benefits from a centralized water supply from 88% in 1994 to 99% in 2010.

While the number of plans focused on environmental issues is heartening, Turkey's government still falls short in their implementation. The NCCAP for example provides for major reductions in emissions, but no overall domestic targets have yet been adopted. Turkey also does not yet have a greenhouse gas reduction target for 2020. The government has also not yet set criteria for bilateral talks regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive. Construction plans for nuclear power plants (especially in areas prone to earthquakes) remain a contentious political and public issue. The government during the period was not able to carry out a strategic environmental assessment or an environmental impact assessment of regional hydropower plants.

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