



European Commission

EU environment- related indicators 2006



Measuring environmental progress
in Europe



INTRODUCTION

A clean and healthy environment is essential for achieving the quality of life and prosperity that we want for ourselves and for our children.

European citizens do care about the environment, and seven out of ten EU citizens feel that the state of the environment influences their quality of life, views found by two Eurobarometer surveys (1) published in 2005:

Of all respondents, 85 % felt that 'policymakers should consider the environment to be as important as economic and social policies'. Furthermore, even more citizens (88 %) felt that policy-makers should take into account environmental concerns when taking decisions in other areas such as the economy and employment. When it comes to making a trade-off, European Union citizens give priority to protection of the environment over economic competitiveness (63 % take this view with 24 % disagreeing).

Over the past 30 years, the European Union has adopted a range of environmental measures aimed at improving and protecting our environment.

The European Commission has a statutory responsibility to safeguard the environment and keep the public informed. Indicators are a concise way to show progress towards achieving environmental protection targets.

This leaflet presents ten environment-related indicators that highlight trends relevant to the Sixth Environment Action Programme's priority areas: climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health and quality of life, and natural resources and waste. They reveal that improvements have been made in some areas, whereas in others further progress needs to be made.

KEY

The indicators highlight trends at EU level by using traffic light colours. The colour of the heading summarises the overall situation. The bullets, which are also colour-coded, highlight the main issues. The assessment for most indicators is based on recent official documents of the European Commission.

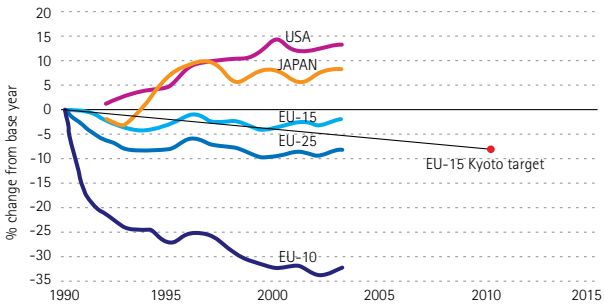
Red means poor performance, indicating that worrying trends are not reversed, and/or that targets are unlikely to be met (where targets exist).

Amber means trends are not evident, or overall problems remain despite some mixed progress.

Green is given for good progress, indicating that worrying trends have been reversed or the EU is on track to meet targets, where there are targets.

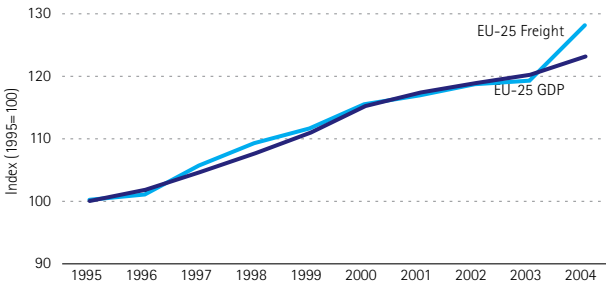
(1) The two special Eurobarometer surveys 'Lisbon' and 'The attitudes of European citizens towards environment' were carried out in autumn 2004 and their results are available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index.htm

1. Climate change – Greenhouse gas emissions



- The EU-15 Kyoto target is an 8 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to base year 1990 levels by 2008–12. Data for 2003 show that the EU-15 had achieved a 1.7 % reduction over 1990 levels, showing a reversed trend compared to 2002.
- In order to meet its Kyoto target, the EU-15 needs to implement additional policies and measures as well as make use of the Kyoto 'flexible mechanisms'. All 10 new EU Member States have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and the eight ⁽¹⁾ that have committed to reduce their emissions by either 8 % or 6 % had – in 2003 – already managed to successfully exceed their Kyoto target (except for Slovenia).

2. Transport



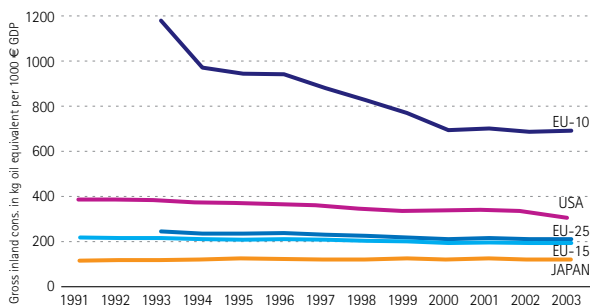
- The EU aims to decouple transport growth from economic growth ⁽²⁾. Between 1995 and 2004 freight transport ⁽³⁾ has increased by 28 % while GDP increased by 23.1 %. The increase is mainly due to road transport, which increased by more than 32 %. The growth in freight transport has been far from uniform. A sharp increase in the freight transport statistics in 2004 partially reflects a change in statistical methodology.
- Moreover, greenhouse gas emissions from transport continue to grow on average by 1 % per year.

⁽¹⁾ Cyprus and Malta do not have emissions reductions targets under the Kyoto protocol.

⁽²⁾ Economic growth is measured by growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

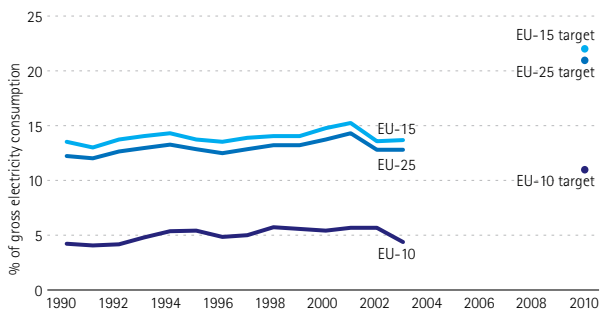
⁽³⁾ This indicator includes transport by road, rail and inland waterways.

3. Energy intensity



During the 1990s energy intensity steadily decreased in the EU, but since 2000 there has been no change. In 2003, as in 2001, energy intensity increased compared to the previous year. Only seven Member States show a continuous and significant decrease in demand for energy per GDP, partly due to specific energy efficiency measures. The European Commission has proposed ⁽¹⁾ to set an EU target of reducing energy consumption by 20 % compared to the 2020 baseline as forecast in 2005.

4. Electricity from renewables

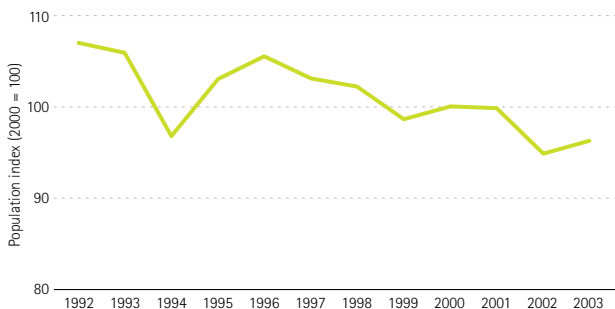


The EU's indicative target is to produce 21 % of all electricity from renewable sources by 2010. The share of electricity produced from renewables in 2003 was 12.7 %, as it was in 2002. Increases in additional new renewable capacity are countered by lower production in hydroelectricity, which represents almost 80 % of total renewable electricity but is largely determined by the weather conditions. Member States are showing varying trends; in particular renewables have increased significantly in Denmark and Spain. Certain countries have a greater natural potential for producing renewable energy. Policy discussions on EU targets beyond 2010 have commenced.

The share of renewables in EU-10 has decreased in 2003 to reach 4.3 %. This is largely due to the fact that in some countries, like Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia, renewables decreased by more than 3.5 %.

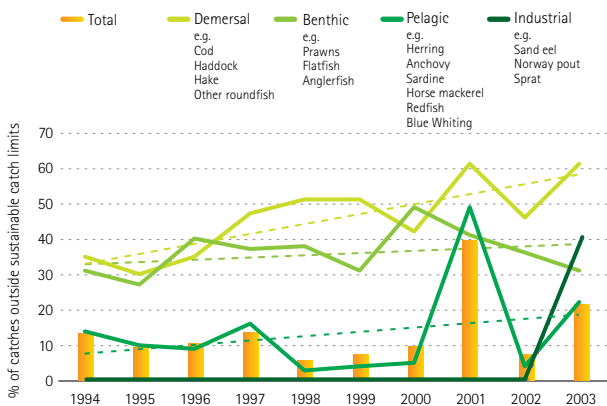
⁽¹⁾ 2005 Green Paper on Energy efficiency.

5. Biodiversity – Bird populations



The EU has an objective of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The trend in common farmland bird species dependent on agricultural land for nesting or feeding is considered a good indicator of trends in farmland biodiversity. Although the 2003 value of this indicator (1) shows an increase in the common farmland bird population compared to 2002, there is concern about the general negative trend, in particular during recent decades. Changes in land use may explain part of this decline.

6. Fisheries – Catches outside safe limits



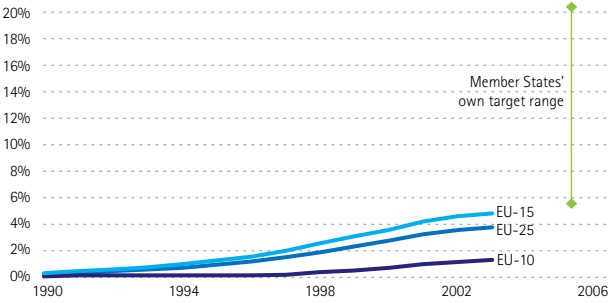
In 2003 22 % of total catches were outside safe biological limits, marking a substantial worsening compared to 2002 (8 %). While the situation for benthic stocks improved since 2000 (31 % stocks outside safe biological limits in 2003), demersal stocks have shown a constant deterioration (61 % in 2003).

In 2001 and 2003 some important pelagic and industrial stocks, which supply large catches, fell out of safe biological limits for the first time, causing the large variations in the indicator for these years.

Key: Benthic fish live on or in sea bed. Demersal fish live in close relation to the bottom and depend on it, while pelagic fish spend most of their lives in open water. Products from industrial fish are used for industrial processes, not for human consumption.

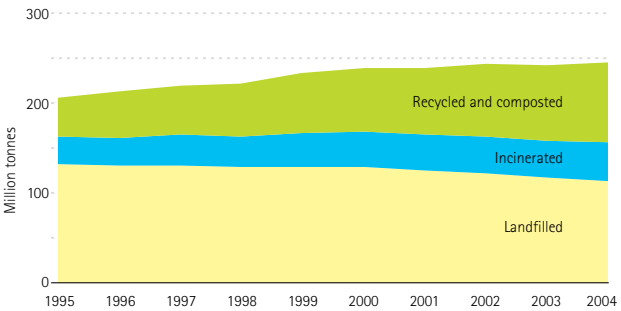
(1) The EU index is based on trend data from 16 EU Member States. It is indexed on the year 2000. This year has been selected so as to provide the maximum geographic coverage.

7. Organic farming



Organic farming is one way in which environmental concerns are incorporated into agriculture policy. Though organic farming has increased greatly since the 1980s, the growth rate has decreased from 18.9 % in 2001 to 4.5 % in 2003. In 2003 organic farming was practised on 3.8 % of total farmland, with differences between EU-15 (4.8 %) and EU-10 (1.3 %). 15 Member States show a continuous increase in recent years, in particular Greece. The countries which have the highest share of organic farming are Austria and Italy, with at least 8 %.

8. Municipal waste - Generation and treatment

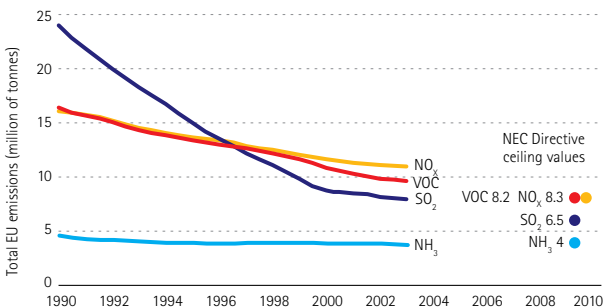


Between 1995 and 2004 municipal waste increased by 19.4 %. No significant decoupling between the increase in waste generated and the increase in GDP seems to have been achieved, as they both follow roughly the same trend. The amounts of municipal waste sent to landfill have been declining very slowly over the years.

Recycling ⁽¹⁾ of municipal waste doubled between 1995 and 2004 to reach 89.4 million tonnes. Energy recovered by incineration is slowly increasing and in 2003 has generated about 8.8 million tonnes oil equivalent of energy.

⁽¹⁾ The amount of municipal waste recycled and composted is estimated as a difference from municipal waste generated and the amounts landfilled and incinerated.

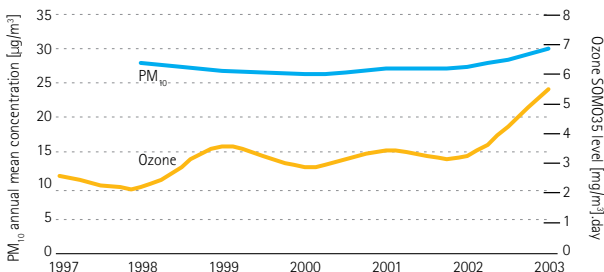
9. Air emissions



The EU has to reduce air emissions to 2010 targets as set by the National Emissions Ceiling Directive. Since 1990 the EU-25 has reduced its sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions by 66.9 %, its nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions by 32.2 %, its volatile organic compounds (VOC) emissions by 41.5 %, and ammonia (NH₃) emissions by 17.4 %.

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and ammonia (NH₃) have harmful effects on human health and on the environment. They result in acidification, eutrophication and concentrations of ground-level ozone and particulate matter.

10. Urban air quality



Data from some large European cities indicate that concentrations of particulate matter (PM₁₀)⁽¹⁾ are high and increased slightly in recent years. The increase in 2003 is partly due to unfavourable weather conditions. However, in many cities the situation did improve. Particulate matter has serious health implications, reducing life expectancy in the EU by about nine months and causing illness⁽²⁾.

For ground level ozone⁽³⁾, concentrations seem not to be improving⁽⁴⁾. Differing annual weather conditions, like the heat wave in 2003, influence air pollution levels and cause variations unrelated to emission changes. Ozone causes respiratory diseases and is linked with premature deaths. It is a major health concern for vulnerable groups such as asthmatics, children and the elderly.

⁽¹⁾ Including cities from 12 Member States (AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, NL, PL, PT, SE, SK, UK).

⁽²⁾ Source: Impact assessment of the thematic strategy on air pollution.

⁽³⁾ Including cities from 15 Member States (AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, IT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, UK).

⁽⁴⁾ Results are based on 'urban background stations' in cities having a population over 250 000 inhabitants, using PM10 annual mean concentrations and for the ozone indicator 'sum of means over 35 ppb ozone' (SOM035) calculated from daily eight-hourly maximum concentrations. Population weighting is applied. Further information may be obtained from: env-airquality@cec.eu.int

DATA SOURCES

Data sources for indicators are:

- 1, 9 and 10 – European Environment Agency.
- 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 – Eurostat and other European Commission departments.
- 5 – Pan-European common bird monitoring scheme (PECBM) and Eurostat.
- 7 – Eurostat and the Institute of Rural Sciences, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information on these indicators can be found on the European Commission's structural indicators database ⁽¹⁾ and the European Environment Agency's core set of indicators ⁽²⁾, included in the 'European environment – state and outlook 2005' report ⁽³⁾. Indeed several of the indicators in the leaflet are taken from these sets of indicators.

More information on the EU's environment policies can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/index_en.htm

⁽¹⁾ <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/structuralindicators>

⁽²⁾ <http://themes.eea.eu.int/IMS/CSI>

⁽³⁾ http://reports.eea.eu.int/state_of_environment_report_2005_1/en

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