



Environment Report

Environmental Policy

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2018

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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 has risen rapidly in the political sphere, partly because of the need to comply with international standards. 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. However, the dependence of the economy on energy-heavy technologies remains a challenge. On the other hand, Estonia is sparsely populated and possesses significant natural resources – wetlands, forests, and protected areas for flora and fauna.

On climate protection, the country is progressing in line with international targets. It has reduced greenhouse-gas emissions by half in a little over 20 years, even as the size of its economy has doubled. By 2050, Estonia aims to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 80% compared to the 1990 level. The share of renewable energy in Estonia today is already at 25%, close to the European Union's 2030 target. The main remaining challenge is the future of the oil-shale sector.

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 country's lakes and rivers are very small, and therefore highly sensitive to any pollution whatsoever.

More than half of Estonia's territory is forested. Commercial forests account for 70% of all forest area, while the remaining third has been placed under various protection regimes. Although the volume of forests has increased over the last 50 years, deforestation and clear-cutting has intensified in recent years. This has triggered

several public protests against clear-cutting and for more responsible forest management.

Finally, 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 are 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. Strong emphasis has been put on environmental concerns in the process of planning the route for the Rail Baltic high-speed railway.

Latvia

Score 9

Environmental policy effectively ensures the sustainability of natural resources and protects the quality of the environment, as evidenced by Latvia's consistently high rankings in the Environmental Performance Index produced by Yale and Columbia universities. Water resources, environmental health policy and biodiversity were identified as particular strengths. However, weaknesses remain in the areas of forests, agriculture and fisheries.

In 2015, Latvia adopted a new Environmental Policy Strategy for the 2014 – 2020 period, prioritizing a new financing model for the use of revenue from the natural-resources tax, creating a deposit system for waste management, improving standards in waste-water management, and improving research and development capacities.

The Climate Change Financial Instrument, funded through the International Emissions Trading Scheme, is the main climate-change policy instrument.

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 government acts as both regulator and largest landowner with respect to Latvia's forests. Protection of forests is well organized and secured through legislation, which regulates all related economic activities, including harvesting, management plans, regeneration and monitoring and control of tree species.

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. Natura 2000 designated sites cover 12% of the territory of Latvia, representing 327 different areas for the protection of habitats and species. A law called On Protection of Species and Habitats also provides for the establishment of micro-reserves to protect small-scale biologically rich areas that lie

outside of protected territories. Over 2,000 micro-reserves had been established as of 2012.

Citation:

1. Yale University (2016), Environmental Performance Index Rankings, Available at: <http://epi.yale.edu/country/Latvia>. Last assessed: 06.10.2017

2. European environment – state and outlook 2015. European Environment Agency. Available at: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/countries/latvia>, Last assessed 22.11.2015

Sweden

Score 9

As is the case with global social injustice, Sweden tries to be a forerunner in environmental policy as well. Sweden performs extremely well in areas such as reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the use of renewable energy sources but is not a leader in recycling or water usage. Thus, while there is strong political commitment among all the major political parties, the execution of that commitment in some aspects is still lagging. Meanwhile, Sweden continues to push environmental issues in international forums such as the EU and is a strong supporter of the Paris Agreement.

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 certainly has a long way to go, but the data suggest its environmental policy is working. It should be noted that environmental policy is an integrated component of the larger project of restructuring the economy and making it more environmentally friendly.

After the 2014 elections, the Social Democrats formed a coalition government with the Greens. While both the Social Democrats and the Greens are strongly committed to “green” issues, it seems as if the Greens’ ascendance to power has further increased the attention on environmental issues. Nonetheless, the two coalition partners do disagree on some issues. For instance, they do not seem to agree on the future of nuclear power; the Social Democrats want to study the issue further whereas the Greens want to shut down two reactors before the next elections (in 2018). Meanwhile, as fate would have it, two nuclear power plants are now scheduled to be closed over the next few years by their owners due to falling electricity prices and the resulting low profitability.

Switzerland

Score 9

In this area, 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, Switzerland has in recent years developed 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. In 2016, the “Energy Strategy 2050” was adopted by parliament and won a majority in a popular vote in May 2017. It aims to significantly develop energy efficiency and exploit the potential of water power as well as other renewable energies (e.g., solar, wind, geothermal and biomass). There will be no permits for the construction of new nuclear power stations or any fundamental changes to existing nuclear power stations. However, existing nuclear power stations may stay in operation for as long as they are deemed safe. A more radical initiative was rejected in a popular vote on 27 November 2016. It would have led to the shutdown of existing nuclear power plants in the near future. Three out of the five nuclear power plants would have been closed down by 2017.

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 ozone and other threshold values are frequently exceeded, and legislation for more ambitious norms on CO₂ reduction has suffered setbacks.

- 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 protection. The number of animal and plant species that have become extinct or are at the risk of extinction continues to rise.
- In Europe, Switzerland has the lowest share of conservation areas for sustaining bio-diversity.

The 2015 national election led to a loss of power for the green-left parties in parliament, weakening those actors who most fervently have supported environmental protection. In recent referenda, voters have preferred excellent motorways, such as an additional tunnel in the Gotthard-region, over environmental preservation. A major challenge for environmental policies in Switzerland remains the adequate and bona fide implementation of federal rules by cantonal and municipal institutions.

Denmark

Score 8

Denmark is considered a front-runner in environmental policy. According to the 2015 Climate Change Performance Index of the Climate Action Network Europe, Denmark is the most climate-friendly country in the world. According to the Environmental Performance Index for 2017 (produced by the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy), Denmark ranked 13 out of 178 countries. Denmark ranked first for health impacts as well as water and sanitation, but 97th for forests, 93rd for fisheries and 86th for agriculture. Agriculture's contribution to ground and

water pollution has occasionally become a political issue in Denmark.

In 2015, Denmark had four EU infringement cases regarding the environment. Seven other member states had fewer, but 20 other member states had more. In 2016 Denmark had five cases, while five countries had fewer. In 2015, Denmark had one Article 260 case (infringement) before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and zero in 2016. In 2016, there were 24 Article 260 cases distributed among 10 EU member states.

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% 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.

While CO2 emissions measured on the basis of Danish production have been reduced by about 20% since the mid-1990s, the reduction is only about 5% when measured in terms of consumption. Hence, while Danish production has become more CO2 friendly this is largely mitigated by imports from countries where production is less CO2 friendly. Measured in terms of production Denmark has emissions per capita that rank it 8th highest in the OECD and measured in terms of consumption 7th highest.

Denmark has set rather ambitious goals including that energy production should be fossil free by 2050. Several sub-targets have been set to reach this goal. While the long-term goal is for Denmark to be independent of fossil fuels by 2050, the government has also called for green realism in environmental policy and there are signs that some environmental goals will be softened.

Citation:

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.

Regeringen, 2017, Energi, forsyning og klima, <https://www.regeringen.dk/regeringens-politik-a-%C3%A5/energi-forsyning-og-klima/> (accessed 7 December 2017).

Climate Action Network Europe, “The Climate Change Performance Index. Results 2015,” <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/10407.pdf>. (Accessed 23 October 2016).

Rockwool Fondensforskningensenhed, 2014, Measuring Denmark’s CO2 emissions. Copenhagen.

Environmental Performance Index. Country profile: Denmark. <http://www.epi.yale.edu/epi/country-profile/denmark> (accessed 7 October 2015, re-accessed 23 October 2016).

EU Environmental infringements, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/statistics.htm> (Accessed 20 October 2017).

Finland

Score 8

Finland faces quite specific environmental challenges in terms of climate change and population growth; yet the country's contribution to larger efforts in combating climate change have to date been fairly modest. Still, after being ranked 18th out of 178 countries in Yale University's 2014 Environmental Performance Index, Finland was top-ranked ahead of Iceland, Sweden and Denmark in 2016. Water pollution is a major challenge in Finland. While pollution emissions from large industrial facilities have to a large extent been successfully curbed and polluted lakes and rivers have been cleaned, waterborne nutrient emissions 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 overall annual growth rate of trees in the forests exceeds the total timber harvest, a result of institutionalized protections. Separately, efforts to halt an ongoing decline in biodiversity have proved insufficient, though the government has created networks of protected areas. The environment and natural resources are among the responsibilities of 13 centers for economic development, transport and the environment. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy supervises the general administrative work of these centers. Recent research suggests that in environmental matters in which economic factors play a key role there is a trend towards restricting the rights of citizens to be informed about and influence decisions.

Citation:

Jari Lyytimäki, "Environmental Protection in Finland", <http://finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=160041>; "Finland's Environmental Administration", http://www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/Finlands_environmental_administration; <http://archive.epi.yale.edu/epi/country-rankings>; Sebastian Frick and Luis Marin Morillas, "Environmental Policies in Finland", <https://prezi.com/x6yy6xidpwaj/environmental-policies-in-finland/>; Siina Raskulla, "Ympäristöperusoikeus poliittikainstrumenttina ja kansalaisoikeutena", pp. 280-297, Politiikka, 2016,Nr 4.

Germany

Score 8

In the latest Environmental Performance Index, Germany places only among the second tier of "strong performers," ranking behind its European peers. After ranking sixth worldwide in 2015, Germany now is ranked 30th in the world, trailing behind front-runner Finland by roughly 6.4 points (90.68, EPI 2016: 18). However, Germany improved its score from 80.47 to 84.26 (Environmental Performance Index 2016: 111). The authors note that in absolute numbers Germany improved considerably, exhibiting "historically good environmental records" (Environmental Performance Index 2016: 111). Germany performs well in the areas of water resources, sanitation, biodiversity, climate and energy. The reason for the huge ordinal drop in rank (other countries dropped significantly as well, Switzerland from rank 1 to 16) are mainly due to improvements in the methodology of the index (e.g.,

new indicators). In the case of Germany, “more robust and telling air quality measures” (111) led to a reassessment of Germany’s air quality. Current government policies geared toward forests and fisheries likewise leave ample room for improvement.

The greatest environmental policy challenge remains adequately responding to the 2011 government decision to phase out nuclear energy by 2022. The coalition decided that the financial responsibility for the demolition of nuclear plants and resulting atomic waste would remain fully with plant operators. How this decision will influence energy prices remains an open question, but it will very likely place further burdens on consumers. With regard to alternative forms of energy production, Germany is comparatively well prepared. The country has become an investor friendly destination for renewable energy, offshore wind farms, cogeneration, and the energy efficient redevelopment of buildings and other infrastructure. Nonetheless in 2016 renewable energy accounted for only 14.6% of the primary energy supply (Umweltbundesamt 2017), which means Germany ranks among the lower half of the OECD countries (OECD 2017). As a key component of the energy system transition, the government seeks to increase the share of renewable energy in electricity consumption to at least 40% by 2025 and 55% by 2035 (provisional data for 2016: 32.7%; Umweltbundesamt 2017). Thus, major challenges remain regarding how to organize and finance the demolition of nuclear plants and storage of wastes, expand the electric grid to supply renewable energy, and harmonize the phase out of nuclear energy while also reducing CO₂ emissions.

All three challenges received attention in the current review period. The renaissance of lignite use after the shutdown of the first nuclear plants endangers the goal of successfully reducing CO₂ emissions. In fact, according to estimates by AG Energiebilanzen, German CO₂ emissions rose in 2015 despite an increase of renewable energy production (Cleanenergywire 2016) putting even more pressure on the government’s ambitious CO₂ emission targets.

Instead of a carbon tax, proposed by Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel, public investments and subsidies will be allocated for energy efficiency. To accommodate concerns from citizens groups in southern Germany, the building of new high-voltage transmission lines will be avoided or installed underground. This compromise implies additional costs of roughly €10 billion, which are to be covered by taxpayers. In particular with regard to the projected costs of underground power cables, one can expect public estimates to be overoptimistic. In September 2016, Bavaria’s energy minister, Ilse Aigner, stated investment costs of approximately €6 billion. In reply, Lex Hartman, CEO of Tennet, an electricity company involved in the construction, estimated construction costs to be €15 billion.

In 2016, Germany also took steps to reform the Renewable Energy Act (EEG), which took effect in 2017. The reform introduces market-based elements to support renewable energy investments and institutes an auction system that aims at keeping the annual capacity added into the grid steady. This new system replaces feed-in-

tariffs that led to an uncontrolled, rapid rise in renewable energy sources which can no longer be accommodated by the energy grid's infrastructure.

Citation:

Environmental Performance Index 2014: http://epi.yale.edu/files/2014_epi_report.pdf

Environmental Performance Index 2016: http://epi.yale.edu/sites/default/files/2016EPI_Full_Report_opt.pdf

Energy mix:

<https://www.cleanenergywire.org/news/german-co2-emissions-rise-2015-despite-renewables-surge>

Power cables:

http://www.br.de/nachrichten/tennet-gleichstromleitung-kosten-100~_page-3~-c0952f36551827d5d4e31304bf17075108eca8d1.html

EEG Novelle:

<https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/eeg-reform-2016-switching-auctions-renewables>

<https://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/G/gesetzentwurf-ausschreibungen-erneuerbare-energien-aenderungen-eeg-2016,property=pdf,bereich=bmwii2012,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>

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OECD (2017), Renewable energy (indicator). doi: 10.1787/aac7c3f1-en (Accessed on 24 November 2017)

Umweltbundesamt 2017:

<https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/indikator-erneuerbare-energien#textpart-1>

Lithuania

Score 8

Lithuania's environmental performance varies significantly by sector. Lithuania's energy intensity is more than twice the EU average, with the residential-housing sector being particularly energy-inefficient. The country is progressing toward a low-carbon economy, with CO₂ emissions declining. Lithuania is likely to achieve its Europe 2020 greenhouse-gas emission targets. The proportion of energy produced from renewable sources in Lithuania reached 23.0% in 2013, Lithuania's Europe 2020 target and further increasing to 27.9% in 2016. A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will reduce Lithuania's dependence on energy imports. Water-supply and sewage infrastructure has benefited substantially over the years through the use of EU structural funds. However, providing adequate connections to the public water supply still remains a challenge in some cases. Moreover, wastewater treatment is inadequate in some respects, with significant differences evident between rural and urban areas. In February 2017, the European Commission initiated an infringement procedure against Lithuania for failing to comply with EU wastewater treatment requirements.

The country's forest-conservation efforts are 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. The country's municipal waste recycling rate reached 34.9% in 2013, well below the EU recycling average. Infrastructure for waste sorting and recycling is insufficiently developed, and most non-hazardous waste is disposed of in landfills. The removal of the landfill tax, which was supposed to enter into force from January 2016, will discourage investment in waste processing and sorting.

Citation:
COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, country report Lithuania 2017:
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-report-lithuania-en.pdf>
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's share of renewable-resource use is among the highest in the world. 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 involving CO₂ storage in seabeds that is aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating CO₂ emissions associated with gas exploitation. However, these initiatives have proved difficult and costly in the transition from research to large-scale experimentation.

Recent positive developments include the announcement that the state petroleum fund will stop investing in petroleum-related businesses and the effects of subsidies for electric cars on car sales. In 2017, more new electric cars were sold than new petroleum-fueled cars in Norway.

Slovenia

Score 8 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 comprise approximately 62% of the total land area, which is about twice the OECD average.

The key mechanism for defining sustainable development goals and targets has been Slovenia's new Development Strategy 2014-2020. In mid-2015, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning initiated a comprehensive public debate about the update of the Spatial Planning Development Strategy (for the period until 2050 with a medium-term action plan until 2020), with a comprehensive third round of consultations taking place in March 2016. Over the last decade, Slovenia has established a comprehensive environmental legislation. It has transposed most EU environmental directives into the 2004 Environmental Protection Act and other national laws. It has introduced risk-based planning of environmental inspections and improved compliance monitoring and enforcement. Several action plans and programs are in planning, such as plans to reduce GHG emissions, implement risk assessments of natural and other disasters, establish an operational program for drinking water supplies, develop a new biodiversity strategy, and create a national development program to establish an adequate waste management infrastructure. Another instrument providing support to individuals is the ECO Fund, which creates financial incentives for various energy-efficiency measures and renewable energy schemes.

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 – for example, by helping manage nature reserves.

However, as in many countries, the legal basis enabling NGOs to challenge government decisions in the courts could be strengthened and their independence from public finances 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.

In 2017, Slovenia was also hit by massive fires at two waste processing plants, Kemis and Ekosistemi. The fires left both heavily damaged and devastated the ecological environment surrounding both locations. The fires – and even more so – the authorities' slow response have underscored the substantial deficiencies in environmental legislation and administration, as well as in the government's commitment to protect the environment and the health of citizens.

Citation:

Slovenia Times (2017): Kemis temporarily banned from collecting new waste after fire. May 29, 2017 (<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/kemis-temporarily-banned-from-collecting-new-waste-after-fire>).

Canada

Score 7

Environmental policy, across the board, is more-or-less balanced in Canada, with some areas performing better than others. Biodiversity in Canada's forests and waterways has reduced over the last several years, although climate change and renewable energy policies have featured prominently in public policymaking over the last year.

A bill (No. C-38) passed in 2012 made substantial changes to Canada's environmental laws. It eliminated the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, lowering the stringency of the federal environmental-assessment process and limiting the scope for public involvement. The bill also had a number of implications for renewable water resources, forests, and biodiversity, including eliminating federal protection for 95% of Canada's lakes and rivers. Amendments to the Species at Risk Act relieved the National Energy Board of the duty to impose critical-habitat-protection conditions on projects it approves. In addition, companies no longer have to renew permits periodically for projects that threaten critical habitats. A report from the World Wildlife Fund found that half of Canada's species are in decline and the 64 species protected by the Species at Risk Act have seen their populations decline since the legislation was adopted in 2002 – a major policy failure. However, the tide seems to be turning for conservation policy. In 2017, the introduction of bills C-48, a moratorium for large oil tankers accessing ports on British Columbia's north coast, and C-55, which establishes a network of protected marine areas and prohibits certain activities in these areas, indicate an effort to increase conservation of marine resources.

In 2016, Canada ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, committing to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 30% under 2005 levels by 2030, adopting

this commitment as a national target. The Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change represents a collaborative effort to ensure the target is met through carbon pricing, investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies. Renewable energy policy is largely the responsibility of the provinces and several have already made significant efforts in the fight against climate change. However, the 2017 Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development report concluded that federal government departments and agencies are “nowhere near being ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change.” Further, in November 2016, the federal government approved two out of three major oil pipelines, including the controversial Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline. The Kinder Morgan pipeline would triple the capacity of the existing pipeline, increase greenhouse gas emissions and increase tanker traffic around British Columbia’s coast sevenfold. In the coming years, it will be challenging for Canada to fulfill its environmental commitments, while also maintaining an internationally competitive oil sector.

Citation:

Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2017 Fall Report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada, posted at http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_cesd_201710_00_e_42488.html

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Tasker, John Paul. “Trudeau cabinet approves Trans Mountain, Line 3 pipelines, rejects Northern Gateway.” CBC, November 29, 2016. Accessed on September 27, 2017 at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/federal-cabinet-trudeau-pipeline-decisions-1.3872828>

World Wildlife Fund (2017), Living Planet Report Canada: A national look at wildlife loss, posted at <http://www.wwf.ca/newsroom/reports/lprc.cfm>

Ireland

Score 7

Climate Policy:

In 2013, the government published a draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill. 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. During 2015, progress was made toward attaining these targets.

Ireland is a world leader in carbon-efficient agriculture and food production.

At a EU summit in October 2014, Ireland argued strongly for concessions in its carbon-emission reduction targets outside the Emission Trading System, because its agricultural sector (dairy farming in particular) produces almost half of the country’s carbon emissions. The country’s negotiators claimed that displacing this production from Ireland to countries outside the EU would ultimately result in higher global emissions.

During 2015, it was announced that the ban on smoky bituminous fuels, which had been progressively extended to the main cities and towns since 1990, will be applied countrywide by autumn 2018.

Ireland has one of the highest proportions of electricity provided by wind power in the world. On 23 February 2017, wind power generated 55% of Ireland's total supply of electricity compared to 45% in Germany and only 18% in the UK. The figures vary daily according to weather conditions (see: www.windeurope.org/dailywind).

Renewable water resources:

In 2000, Ireland signed the EU Water Framework Directive into national law. Article 16 of the directive requires the introduction of charges for domestic water. Full implementation of this measure was included in the Troika Agreement with Ireland. In July 2013, Irish Water (Uisce Eireann) was incorporated as a semi-state company under the Water Services Act 2013. The creation of Irish Water merges the water and waste-water services of 34 local authorities together within one national service provider. Irish Water is now responsible for public water services, including the management of national water assets, and making capital investment decisions regarding the country's water infrastructure. Irish Water is accountable to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The installation of domestic water meters began in 2014 and, despite sometimes violent local opposition, this process is now more than three-quarters complete. Substantial up-front costs were incurred with significant savings yet to be achieved. The proposed structure of the domestic water tariffs, which became the focus of fierce public protests, has been repeatedly revised. The water charge element was greatly attenuated, so that the levy became little more than a property-tax surcharge. Consequently, it provides only a weak incentive for conserving water usage.

In June 2016, the Minister of the Environment appointed an Expert Commission on Domestic Public Water Services. Its final report, the Report on the Funding of Domestic Public Water Services in Ireland, was published on 29 November 2016. The commission recommended that “the optimal arrangement is one involving the funding of water services, for domestic and personal use, as a charge against taxation.” It also suggested that “excessive or wasteful use of water will be discouraged by charging for such use and therefore is consistent with the ‘polluter pays principle.’” Essentially the commission marginalized the issue of water charges, suggesting that the “question of metering is one of policy and is outside the Expert Commission’s terms of reference.”

Finally, in 2015, Eurostat ruled that the mechanisms proposed by the Irish government to fund Irish Water did not meet the criteria for classifying it as a commercial company. As a result, for national accounting purposes, its budget must be included in the public-sector budget (for further details see our section on Policy Communication).

Forest area:

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 has been shelved in response to concerns about the potentially adverse effects on the amenity value of these lands assets. Increased afforestation has been proposed in exchange for leeway on the emissions from the Irish dairy sector.

Biodiversity:

Ireland is broadly compliant with EU directives on biodiversity, and engages in enforcement measures to protect wildlife and flora. An extensive rural environmental protection scheme has sought to encourage farming in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner. In addition, a large number of protected areas have been designated.

Citation:

Report on the Funding of Domestic Public Water Services in Ireland, November 2016.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2015/215/b215d.pdf>

For an update on Ireland's progress in regard to renewable energy see

http://www.seai.ie/Publications/Statistics_Publications/Energy_in_Ireland/Energy-in-Ireland-1990-2013-report.pdf

The latest data on emissions, etc. are contained in an EPA factsheet:

http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/indicators/epa_factsheet_waste_v2.pdf

Information on the National Biodiversity Data Center is available at:

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>

The coverage of protected areas is set out in:

<http://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>

Luxembourg

Score 7

During the period under review, Luxembourg has made efforts to protect water resources and curb emissions through a series of governmental measures. However, efforts such as reducing carbon emissions, caused partly by the phenomenon of "fuel tourism" by cross-border commuters, as well as the progressive improvement of the water quality of rivers and lakes, need to be continued. A new joint venture drinking water plant with a daily capacity of 110,000 cm³ is to be built.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Luxembourg pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 20% by 2020. However, government commitment to this target has been weak, due to significant tax revenues (€800 million) derived from fuel tourism. This is because around 75% of fuel sold in Luxembourg is exported. Indeed, fuel tourism has increased carbon emissions and negated Luxembourg's emissions policies. With

17.61 metric tons of CO₂, Luxembourg had the highest carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the OECD in 2016. The planned Google data center will add another energy-hungry consumer and further challenge Luxembourg's emissions commitments.

Other prominent key determinants of higher carbon emissions include dynamic economic growth and new car leasing by cross-border workers. Luxembourg has Europe's highest energy consumption per capita, the second highest vehicle density after Malta (661 vehicles per 1,000 people in 2015) and the highest renewal rate of passenger cars (12.5%).

Despite the debate concerning environmental liability, Luxembourg was the only EU member state to reduce its biofuel ratio in 2012. Between 2015 and 2020, as part of the Kyoto Protocol, Luxembourg has agreed to contribute €5 million annually to the Green Climate Fund.

Luxembourg also has the lowest share of energy consumption from renewable sources of any EU member state (2015: 5%). Furthermore, only 36% (2014) of wastewater is treated in modern triple-phase sewage treatment plants. In 2011, the European Court of Justice ruled against the government for a second time for "failing in its obligation to treat and dispose of urban waste water." As a result, Luxembourg has been paying a fine of €2,800 per day since 2013, accumulating to date to €5 million. The government has prioritized public expenditure for the construction of wastewater treatment plants. Following the court's judgment, five of the six treatment plants have been modernized. In addition, the government announced further investments in new sewage treatment plants and water supply installations.

Almost 60% of the country's deep wells have pesticide residue, with many concentrated in the south of the country. Although Luxembourg is committed to the OECD and EU Pesticide Risk Reduction Project, implementation has been slow. For instance, the community framework for the sustainable use of plant protection products directive (2009/128/EG) only became national law in December 2014.

Furthermore, there are problems with wastewater treatment and drinking-water supplies during particularly dry summers. The monitoring of water systems is insufficient. To improve drinking-water quality, the environmental administration designated 80 drinking-water protection areas and 42 communes have banned pesticides since 2016.

As of 2011, Luxembourg had the highest degree of landscape fragmentation in Europe, which has undermined the country's biodiversity. Many animal and plant species are classified as being 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.

Thus, the country's environmental policy faces major challenges. Programs

implemented during this period are intending to address: 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 counselling; 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:

“Contribution agreement Luxembourg.” Green Climate Fund 2017, www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/29917/Contribution_agreement_-_Luxembourg.pdf/e9d61c5c-91ad-4329-8b93-389599520742. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

“Kläranlagen kosteten bereits 5 Millionen an Strafe.” Luxemburger Wort. 14 June 2017. www.lessentiel.lu/de/luxemburg/story/Klaeranlagen-kosteten-bereits-5-Millionen-an-Strafe-26666625. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

“National Action Plan (NAP) for Luxembourg.” www.ec.europa.eu/food/plant/docs/pesticides_sup_nap_luxembourg_en.pdf

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www.gouvernement.lu/4444990/12-qualite-eau?context=3393616

“Rapport d'activité 2016.” Administration de la gestion de l'eau, 2017.
www.eau.public.lu/publications/rapports_activite/rapport_activite_2016.pdf

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www.gouvernement.lu/7180112/vierter-nationaler-energieeffizienzakitionsplan-luxembourg. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

United Kingdom

Score 7

Environmental goals were ostensibly close to the heart of both governments led by David Cameron. Yet, some critics have expressed dismay at cuts in subsidies for green energy, and an increase in government support for natural gas fracking and nuclear power. The latter reaffirmed in the decision to proceed with a new reactor. The coalition government (2010-2015) set itself the goal of becoming “the greenest government ever,” and its Conservative successor government has not noticeably changed tack. However, worries about the cost of living led the government to suspend automatic increases in fuel duties for seven years in succession, and there have been rumblings of discontent over the 2008 Climate Change Act, which forms the legislative foundation for climate-change policies.

In many areas, the Cameron government continued previous government's initiatives. For example, market-based environmental policy mechanisms, and a planning system designed to preserve and protect “green belts” around major conurbations. The “eco towns” initiative of the former Labour government, promoting low carbon emissions, renewable energy, expansive green space and high recycling rates, was substantially scaled back due to spending cuts.

After taking over from Cameron in July 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May dissolved the Department of Energy and Climate Change, which had existed since 2008, merging it into the newly established Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. This step was harshly criticized by environmentalist groups. In her keynote speech at the Conservative and Unionist Party Conference, Prime Minister May did not mention any environmental topics beyond the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement which took place on 11 November 2016. In a speech given at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2017 she stressed again the importance of staying within that agreement. There are renewed signs under the current environment minister, Michael Gove, that environmental policy will feature more prominently in the government's agenda in future.

Much environmental policy is still 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. After "Brexit," some divergence from the European Union could occur, although there is no reason to believe that the United Kingdom will renege on big issues such as the Paris climate accord. Renewable water resources have never been an issue for the United Kingdom, although utility companies are being encouraged to reduce leaks and improve sewerage. Forestry policy is a devolved competence. In England there is Forestry Commission, which has responsibility for both trees and biodiversity.

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 thought of 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.

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 environmental protection. Public opinion in Austria is inclined to think the country should be in the vanguard of international environmental protection and for that reason Austria's signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in Paris at the end of 2015 was not disputed domestically. Despite all this, Austria is one of the very few EU countries that has failed to meet the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol. To this day, Austria's greenhouse gas emission levels are very high for a country of its size, well above those of its neighbors France, Italy and Switzerland, but below Germany.

Partly due to EU laws (the so-called Eurovignette directive), more international transit, 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. Greenhouse gas emissions for heavy vehicles and trucks have not decreased since 2005 – contrary to other traffic emission sources.

Industry and commerce remain the largest contributor to CO2 emissions. 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. As the FPÖ – a party that has repeatedly denied the existence of human-induced climate change – will become a governing party, there is not much reason that this trend will be reversed.

Citation:

World bank data on COP2 emissions: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?view=map>
CO2 Emission data for Austria: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/fileadmin/site/publikationen/REP0582.pdf>

Belgium

Score 6

The Belgian government has established a climate-policy website (www.climat.be) on which the authorities themselves concede that the country's environmental policy is "rather complicated" given the unique policymaking arrangements. Belgium's environmental policy is split between the federal government and the three regions, which makes it largely unmanageable. As of November 2017, the website proudly detailed the progress made between 2008 and 2012, but concluded that the government gave up trying to elaborate a plan for the 2013 – 2020 period in order to "focus on the 2021 – 2030 period."

Generally speaking, environmental quality is slightly below the OECD average. The European Environmental Agency's report "indicates a significant improvement over recent decades, but also shows that a high percentage of the Belgian population is still exposed to excessive concentrations of the four most important air pollutants (PM, NO2, O3 and SO2)." One of the main contributors to this fact has been the country's incapacity to coordinate any form of transportation policy, resulting in consistently declining National Railways Company performance and increasingly long traffic jams.

However, regional initiatives may result in progressive improvements to this situation. The local, bottom-up nature of these projects means that it is hard to see a general pattern or a well-defined policy direction, but this may also produce better results in the long term if these projects are able to achieve their aspirations and increase the general public's awareness of environmental issues.

Car traffic is unlikely to decrease in the short term. Belgium's geographical location between the major northwestern European economic and population basins (UK, France, Netherlands, Germany) makes it an extremely dense transit area, especially for road traffic (cars as well as freight). The government has introduced a controversial per-kilometer tax on trucks, but the main objective this policy is to shift some of the tax burden away from labor, not to reduce traffic. Congestion in the major cities remains high. Brussels, for instance, now ranks as the fifth-most-congested city in Western Europe, according to the TomTom Traffic Index.

Significant improvements in water treatment have been recorded in all regions after Belgium was taken to court by the European Commission for failing to implement its international commitments. Implementation in this area has become a regional prerogative.

The regions are now responsible for maintaining forests and biodiversity. Overall, forest management is proactive, with a view toward long-term sustainability. Increasing attention is given to the issue of biodiversity, but Belgium's highly urbanized nature, especially in the northern portions of the country, provides limited room for short-term improvement in areas of dense construction.

Citation:

References:

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<https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/countries/belgium>
OECD
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<http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Belgium-2017-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>
European Commission (2015): http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/pdf/4th_report/MS%20Annex%20-%20Belgium.pdf

Bulgaria

Score 6

Climate policy in Bulgaria is mostly focused on a relatively rapid increase in the share of renewables in the energy mix and the substitution of higher for lower carbon emitting fuel sources. Per capita CO₂ emissions are relatively low and may decrease further with improvements in energy efficiency.

Water resource management rests predominantly with municipalities, creating problems of coordination and strategy development. One problem in this area arises from the fact that much of the renewable water resources in Bulgaria also affect neighboring countries (i.e., Romania, Turkey, Greece), requiring international coordination. Bulgaria still lacks a clear water-resources strategy.

Forests in Bulgaria are either private, municipal or state property. This fact impedes the development and implementation of coordinated forestry policy actions. However, Bulgaria forest coverage is above the global average and has a long-term growing trend. This indicates that the existing model is performing relatively well and possibly needs incremental adjustments.

Bulgaria has a relatively large share of protected biomes. It is also an active participant in Natura 2000, the European Union's largest network for the preservation of biodiversity, with approximately a quarter of its territory under protection or special status. As opposed to many other issues, there is an active civil society sector working on biodiversity and conservation issues, which is capable of applying political pressure and sometimes achieves results. However, powerful business actors with access to policymakers often manage to violate environmental-protection policies in order to further business interests. Most violations of this kind take place in the tourism and mining sectors.

Chile

Score 6

Chile has an efficient but scarcely restrictive environmental regulatory system. 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). The creation and implementation of complementary institutions, such as environmental tribunals (Tribunales Ambientales) and a chairperson for the environment (Superintendencia Ambiental), showed some progress by the end of 2012. 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 often leads to clashes over 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 on ecological-sustainability grounds. In September 2016, Chile signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, which was ratified in January 2017. This entry into force might foster institutional efforts to protect and preserve natural resources and environmental quality in the near future.

Citation:

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http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9444.php

http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9444.php

http://www.seado.cl/ratifican-acuerdo-de-paris-sobre-cambio-climatico/prontus_senado/2017-01-25/110753.html

Czech Republic

Score 6

The Czech Republic continues to battle both a historical legacy of environmental damage and other ongoing environmental issues. There has been a long-term trend of decline in emissions of acidifying substances, ozone precursors, primary particles, secondary particulate precursors, greenhouse gas emissions from the manufacturing industry. Surface and groundwater pollution have also diminished over time. The main priorities of the State Environmental Policy of the Czech Republic 2012-2020 are the sustainable use of resources, climate and air protection, nature and landscape protection and safe environment. In October 2015, the Czech government adopted the Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Czech Republic, setting specific tasks and deadlines across all fields in which negative impacts of climate change are expected (e.g., agriculture, water and forest management, transport and human health). In 2016, it was complemented by a National Action Plan on Adaptation to Climate Change and a climate protection strategy for the period until 2030 with a long-term outlook until 2050. The stipulated goals are based on the Czech Republic's international commitments regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the relevant EU documents and strategies (e.g., the climate and energy package until 2020, and the new climate and energy framework until 2030). However, in February 2017, the European Commission released the first Environmental Implementation Review to monitor and improve the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This report highlighted mixed performance in the implementation effectiveness of environmental policies and pointed to continuing problems of a slow shift toward a circular economy, poor air quality, rising water scarcity, and inadequate nature protection.

Citation:

European Commission (2017): The EU Environmental Implementation Review – Country Report Czech Republic. SWD(2017) 37 final. Brussels (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report_cz_en.pdf).

France

Score 6

Although the OECD in its 2016 environmental report attests that France has significantly improved its environmental performance over the last ten years, the performance record with respect to environmental targets is not satisfactory. Too often, environmental policies continue to be subordinated to sectoral policies, which are considered more important. The latest example was the October 2014 withdrawal of the so-called eco-tax on truck-transported goods, which was driven by fears of truck driver protests.

France's good performance on carbon emissions is credited to the nuclear sector in France. The objectives set out in the July 2015 energy transition bill (reduce nuclear power in total energy production from 75% to 50% by 2025 and increase renewable energy sources to 40% from its current 12.5% share) are unlikely to be met given the

complex authorization processes for renewable energies.

Until the recent Volkswagen scandal, the government refused to deviate from incentives for diesel cars, as French companies have a marked preference for diesel engines. Following public pressure, the government decided to end the tax privilege it afforded to diesel fuel in October 2016. Additional symbolic measures have been introduced by the new Macron administration, such as the prohibition on further research into oil fields in France (whose production represents 1% of total consumption) or the announcement that by 2030 no cars using combustible fossil fuels would be available for sale in France.

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 objectives set out in the Ecophyto plan (2009) to enhance water quality have not been met by 2015. French authorities have been unable to resist the agriculture lobby, which is the largest consumer of water. The use of pesticides has increased by 29% (2008 – 2014). The attitude of the government is split between a desire to reduce pesticides and pressure from farmers who refuse to reduce their use.

The performance of municipal composting, waste management and recycling are far behind that of other countries.

Air quality is another problem. In the Paris region (Ile-de-France) in particular, but also in many other regions, pollution levels are still above EU targets. Symbolic policies, such as the prohibition of traffic one Sunday per month, are poor substitutes for efficient policies.

The situation is much better with biodiversity and forests, which are experiencing a growth in surface area. A new law on biodiversity was adopted in August 2016. However, the protection of biodiversity has met resistance in metropolitan France by many diverging interests (agriculture, construction and transportation).

Citation:
OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: France 2016, Paris, OECD, 6 oct. 2016

Iceland

Score 6

Environmental policy has historically not been a high priority on Iceland's political agenda. The Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (Umhverfis- og auðlindaráðuneytið) was established, comparatively late, in 1990. The ministry was a single-issue ministry until 2013 when the ministry was merged with fishery and agricultural affairs. However, a new minister for environment and natural resources was nominated at the end of 2014, separating the two ministerial positions. At the time of writing, this remains the situation.

The country is rich in onshore energy and fresh water resources, and has substantial offshore fisheries. However, apart from the fisheries management system in operation since the mid-1980s, there has been little discussion about how to preserve these resources, reflecting a popular assumption that these resources are, in effect, unlimited.

In early 2013, Iceland's parliament made two significant steps toward addressing the country's nature and natural resources. First, parliament passed a new act, Lög um Náttúruvernd No. 60, which strengthened the regulatory framework for protecting the natural environment. Second, the parliament passed a resolution that implemented aspects of the Master Plan for Hydro and Geothermal Energy Resources 1999–2010 (Rammaáætlun). The plan was based on scientific and impartial advice, rather than special interests, and it was intended to be open to public involvement and scrutiny. The 2013 resolution provided greater substance to the initial plan by stipulating which hydropower and geothermal resources could be used for power generation. However, the Gunnlaugsson cabinet (2013-2016) reversed the previous government's progressive environmental policy agenda. In November 2013, the minister for the environment and natural resources argued that the act had "met great resistance from different groups in the society" and proposed to repeal it by spring 2013. After bargaining between government and opposition, a final compromise was ratified in late 2015.

Citation:

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Law on nature protection (Lög um náttúruvernd) 2013 nr. 60 10. apríl.
Vernd og orkunýting landsvæða (rammaáætlun) 89. mál þingsályktunartillaga Þáhl. 13/141 141. löggjafarþingi
2012—2013.

Israel

Score 6

Israel faces significant environmental challenges due to its small territory, high population growth and poor natural water resources. Its geopolitical climate adds another challenge, since unlike many OECD countries, Israel's relationship with its neighboring countries prevents it from sharing power facilities and thereby reducing environmental costs. Security and political considerations also overshadow environmental issues, resulting in long-term neglect of environmental policy even as OECD accession has bound Israel to conform with Western standards and goals.

However, Israel has demonstrated significant recent advances with regard to environmental policy. At the end of 2016, the country ratified the Paris climate agreement. Earlier that year, the governmental approved an ILS 500 million national program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increasing energy efficiency; as a part of this policy, it has committed to reducing its GHG emissions by 26% from the 2005 emissions level. An additional ILS 260 million has been

allocated to a two-year program focused on reducing air pollution. A reduction in emissions intensity was reported in 2017, indicating some early success for the policy effort. In addition, a new solar-power station, one of the largest in the world, will be launched in 2017 in the Negev desert. Israel also has a unique green-tax policy, created to encourage customers to purchase less pollution-intensive cars. This innovative policy has led to positive results, and is regarded as a model within the OECD.

However, Israel has experienced some severe ecological disasters in recent years. In 2011, a backhoe loader damaged an underground fuel pipeline, and 1.5 million liters of jet fuel polluted the Zin river. Three years later, in 2014, another oil pipeline disaster occurred in southern Israel. Millions of liters of oil leaked into Evrona Nature Reserve, creating one of the worst pollution disasters in its history. In 2017, massively acidic water polluted the Ashalim Creek. Investigation of these cases has often lasted for long periods of time, and the Israel Union for Environmental Defense, one of the country's most prominent environmentalist groups, has criticized the fact that criminal proceedings in this area take so long.

Citation:

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Japan

Score 6

Japan was a global leader in terms of antipollution policy and energy conservation in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, Japan has been faced with the major concern of how to improve its domestic energy mix.

The triple 3/11 disaster led to some policy rethinking with respect to nuclear energy. However, the LDP-led government has reiterated that nuclear power will remain important for a considerable time. The country's 48 reactors were all shut between 2011 and 2012. Five reactors have since resumed commercial operation, after meeting revised regulatory standards. As of November 2017, 12 other reactors at six sites had been approved for restart in 2018 or thereafter. In 2017, the Nuclear Regulation Authority also approved plans to decommission five reactors.

While Japan has introduced various measures to support renewable-energy use, the goal of a 22% to 24% renewable share for 2030 will be difficult to reach. Renewables made up around 15% of energy production in fiscal year 2016, compared to 10% before 3/11. The imminent deregulation of the power industry has driven companies to seek low-cost solutions, including coal-fired plants.

Japan has made great progress in terms of waste-water management in recent decades. Today the country has one of the world's highest-quality tap-water systems, for example. The use 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 Asian countries. While the country has in recent years taken a proactive stance under its National Biodiversity Strategy, the 2016 Annual Report found that the long-term decline of biodiversity was continuing.

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New Zealand

Score 6 The performance of New Zealand's environmental policy is mixed but improving. In the 2016 Environmental Performance Index, New Zealand ranked 11 out of 180 countries. However, this particular ranking should not detract from the fact that New Zealand holds only an average overall position in the group of OECD countries. The OECD's third environmental performance report, released in March 2017, increased public concern regarding New Zealand's environmental situation. According to the report, New Zealand's strong economic growth comes partly at the expense of environmental quality, which puts the country's hard-earned green reputation at risk. Central concerns include rising greenhouse gas emissions and declining freshwater quality. The OECD review was particularly critical of New Zealand's record on climate change, saying it has the highest share of emissions from agriculture among the 35 OECD member countries.

Major environmental problems stem from New Zealand's economy, which is heavily dependent on agricultural production and dairy in particular. Areas of concern include water usage and management and greenhouse gas emissions. The main policy tool for tackling greenhouse gas emissions is New Zealand's Emissions Trading Scheme. However, the effectiveness of the scheme is limited, as biological emissions from agriculture and transitional arrangements are excluded. This has halved the carbon price that carbon emitters have had to pay. According to OECD recommendations, the government should address the issue of high greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture through pricing, regulation and R&D, while transitional agreements should be terminated. The then Climate Change Issues Minister Paula Bennett highlighted the need to reform the Emissions Trading Scheme to achieve New Zealand's target for reducing emissions as agreed at the Paris climate conference in December 2015. Deforestation, in contrast, is of much less concern, as logging in indigenous forests on public land has ceased and a permit is required to log on private property (although several major forests will reach maturity in the next few years). 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. Substantial public interest in environmental issues is evidenced by high levels of support for environmental-interest groups (e.g., Greenpeace and Forest and Birds Society) and the significant influence of the Green Party, which has since October 2017 held ministerial responsibility for climate change issues. Prior to the change of government, environmentalists accused the National-led government of pandering to farmers, especially the rapidly expanding dairy industry, who are among National's strongest supporters, and of failing to take a strong stance in supporting international environmental agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol.

The problem of gathering and systemizing environmental data was addressed with the introduction of the Environmental Reporting Act in September 2015. This establishes a broad framework of five key areas for the scope of reporting, namely air, climate and atmosphere, freshwater, marine and land, with biodiversity included in all areas. This followed the restructuring of the Environment Ministry to strengthen its policy capability and the creation of the Environmental Protection Authority. These initiatives formed part of the National government's blue-green agenda for improving New Zealand's environmental institutions. New Zealand had previously been the only OECD country without a statutory requirement for the state reporting of environmental data.

Citation:

Environmental Performance Index 2016 (Yale/Columbia: Yale University/Columbia University 2016) <http://epi.yale.edu/downloads> (accessed June 30, 2016).

Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.govt.nz/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed November 28, 2015).

Ministry for the Environment. About the Environmental Reporting Act 2015 <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/environmental-reporting/about-act> (accessed June 30, 2016).

OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: New Zealand 2017 (<http://www.oecd.org/environment/country-reviews/oecd-environmental-performance-reviews-new-zealand-2017-9789264268203-en.htm>) (accessed January 18, 2018).

Portugal

Score 6

Portugal has long had legislation in place meant to protect the environment. Although the government has failed to implement adequate policies to mitigate climate change, ensure renewable water sources, or to protect forest areas and biodiversity, the reduction in production resulting from the economic crisis has eased the pressures placed on the environment in recent years.

In the 2017 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), Portugal improved its position to 11th overall, up from 16th in 2016, but still falls well below its 4th-place position from 2015 and 3rd-place position from 2014. The country's score improved to 62.47, an increase vis-à-vis 2016 (59.52), but still well below the 2015 level (67.26).

The António Costa government remains committed to the development of renewable energy sources. However, new investments in the renewable energy sector are unlikely to obtain the generous – if not overgenerous – public support given to wind power in 2005-2011.

The country's subsidies for renewables were severely criticized by the EU-ECB-IMF Troika during the 2011-2014 bailout period, which also sought to reduce excessive rents in the energy sector. In addition, the 2016 International Energy Agency (IEA) Review of Portugal noted that “the costs of supporting [renewable energy sources] have been costly and made a significant contribution to the tariff deficit,” and that “rising subsidies to renewable energy have contributed to (...) growth in the tariff debt.”

Subsidies to the renewable sector have also come under fire from the Socialists' left-wing parliamentary allies. While not against renewable sources, the Left Bloc and the Communist Party are against passing through the cost of these subsidies to consumers' energy bills. Both parties demanded during this period that additional measures be taken against excessive rents in the renewable energy sector. While no such measure was adopted in the 2017 budget – indeed, the Socialist Party simply committed to discussing such measures with its parliamentary allies – the fact of the matter is that the political climate has become less favorable for subsidizing renewable energy sources.

During the review period, Portugal gave its approval to the nuclear facility at Almaraz, in Spain, near the Portuguese border, and drawing on the water of the Tagus River that runs through Portugal into the Atlantic Ocean.

Portugal has proposed a National Strategy for Sustainable Development (ENDS) since 2002, but implementation of this strategy continues to be postponed. The strategy could have a substantial positive impact by developing a green public-accounting system; harmonizing and publicizing existing environmental information; creating analysis and decision-making tools that jointly address environmental, social, economic and fiscal issues; reviewing industry regulation; and rationalizing existing environmental funds.

In lieu of the ENDS, this assessment is based largely on newspaper reporting. In this regard, Portugal can be rated as good on climate issues; poor on water resources, though a National Plan for Water is under discussion; poor on forests, but very poor on forest-fire prevention, as exemplified by the devastating fires of 2017; and good on biodiversity, particularly regarding marine environments.

Citation:

Source: Público 18/11/2013.

Technical Report for the DGEP Model Results prepared for the Commission for Green Fiscal Reform (<http://www.portugal.gov.pt/media/1537849/20140917%20fiscalidade%20verde%20anexo%20IV%20DGEP%20model%20results.pdf> (doc 23 e 24)

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Hungary

Score 5

As the 2011 constitution incorporated “green” values, the constitutional basis for environmental policy in Hungary is strong. Comprehensive environmental regulations are in place, and the EU continues to serve as an important driver of policy action. However, environmental policy has suffered from a lack of commitment and institutional fragmentation. Ever since the second Orbán government, no separate Ministry of Environmental Policy has existed. In the third Orbán government, environmental issues have largely been dealt with by the Ministry of Agriculture, in a department led by a deputy state secretary. However, water management has rested with the Ministry of the Interior, and, the subnational environment authorities have become part of the newly created government offices at the county level. Due to the low importance attached to the protection of the environment, problems such as the frequent contamination of drinking water resources and the mismanagement of garbage sites (often inherited from the privatization period of the nineties and still poisoning the environment) have grown. The megalomaniac construction activities of the government have led to a serious “deforestation” in Budapest, as hundreds of big trees in many parts of the capital have been cut. The extension of the Paks nuclear power plant, eventually accepted by the European Commission in October 2017, but still contested by the Austrian government, has been one of the biggest bones of contention between the government and the opposition.

Citation:

Zalan, E. (2017): Commission still silent on Hungarian nuclear contract, in: euobserver, October 4 (<https://euobserver.com/energy/139183>).

Italy

Score 5

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 average in its performances for CO₂ emissions in comparison to GDP. 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 (and in part also because of other conflicting environmental reasons such as protection of the landscape) incentives for solar energy have been reduced in the recent years. Nonetheless, the transition toward renewable energy has gained momentum and renewable energy sources now supply between 32% and 35% of total energy demand (data from GSE). Strong fiscal incentives for sustainable house building and renovations have existed for several

years. An initial discussion about the return to nuclear energy with the purpose of further reducing CO₂ emissions was stopped by the Fukushima disaster.

Forest areas have been growing significantly in recent years and biodiversity is above the European average.

In other dimensions, such as water efficiency and waste management, Italy fares less well. In these fields disparities between northern or central Italy and southern Italy remain significant. Some emergencies in Naples, Palermo and other southern regions have demonstrated in the past years the lower performance of local and regional authorities in environmental matters. The absence or inadequacies of purification plants affects parts of the coastline and rivers.

Recycling rates have increased very significantly in central and northern Italy, but recent ISPRA data also indicates significant improvements in southern Italy where recycling rates had traditionally lagged behind.

Erosion, flood and earthquake prevention should still be a high priority for the government. After the recent 2016 earthquakes, the government is launching a long-term investment policy to promote public and private rebuilding.

Climate change has and will have a huge impact on Italy. The country 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 increasingly 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.

Citation:

<http://www.gse.it/it/Statistiche/RapportiStatistici> (provides data about renewable energies production in Italy)
<http://www.isprambiente.gov.it/archivio/notizie-e-novita-normative/notizie-ispra/2015/05/produzione-rifiuti-e-differenziata-i-dati-di-tutti-i-comuni-italiani-sono-online>
<http://www.asvis.it/rapporto-2017/>

Mexico

Score 5

Mexico is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and has shown every sign of taking environment policy seriously. However, it continues to face several very serious environmental challenges. The provision of clean water to Mexico City, air pollution in the capital and other major cities, deforestation and erosion in rural Mexico are some of the most pressing problems. While a marked decrease in population growth is relieving some environmental pressure, policies aiming to conserve the environment and reduce pollution should remain a top priority for ensuring

sustainable development. 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. It is worth noting the substantial variation between government levels and across issues; the federal government is much more capable, with better and more efficient regulations and monitoring. This is not the case at the local level, where funds, human capital, and administrative resources are scarce; in particular, in the most ecologically rich but poorest regions of the country. In terms of environmental issues, Mexico has very strong air quality regulations and made significant progress over the last two decades. In contrast, norms regulating water consumption and pollution are far less advanced.

From a comparative perspective, the government's recent economic reforms were more diluted and slower to pass than its environment legislation, but implementation of policies and regulations remains a major challenge. Many companies do not comply with existing regulations and the high degree of informality in the economy is further aggravating the challenge of non-compliance. Despite an increasing awareness of environmental challenges among the broader population, particularly among the young, public pressure and support for environmental NGOs remains weak when compared to many other OECD countries. Business interest groups are much more powerful than their environmental counterparts. It is worthwhile noting that the Mexican Green Party is not as "green" as its name might imply in other countries; environmental interests are still weakly nested in the major political parties.

In addition to liberalizing energy prices for gasoline and natural gas, the energy reform of 2013, established provisions for an increasing participation of renewables in the energy mix in Mexico. Private power generators are now able to sell electricity, but the new regulations also provide incentives for the use of renewables and the reduction green house gas emissions by constraining the biggest consumers to get a proportion of their power from clean energy sources. Implementation of these provisions began in 2016 and are expected to increase the participation of renewable energy in the power generation industry.

Netherlands

Score 5

Environmental policy is not a significant issue among the public in the Netherlands. The government has preferred to pursue quick policy wins, with structural reforms receiving insufficient attention. Climate policy has largely focused on medium-term targets, for example 2020 or 2030. Until the Paris Accords, the Dutch government resisted more ambitious climate goals in international negotiations. On 26 October 2016, the Department of Infrastructure and Environment organized a national climate "summit" between national and subnational governmental partners, non-governmental organizations and businesses to discuss implementation of the Paris

Accords. Actual political commitments and policy change will only become visible after the election in spring 2017 and the subsequent cabinet formation process.

There is a clear policy shift toward climate adaptation. This appears manageable today because any adverse developments in the Netherlands will be gradual. The Netherlands' natural-gas reserves are diminishing rapidly and will necessitate gas imports from 2025 onward despite decreasing demand. Meanwhile, earthquakes and soil subsidence are damaging houses in the northern provinces where the Dutch gas reserves are located. The government has introduced compensation measures for victims (still contested as too small).

The quality of air and surface water in the Netherlands is concerning, with intensive farming and traffic congestion the primary causes of concern. Half of rivers, canals and lakes contain too much nitrogen and phosphates. Air pollution, especially particular matter in the region around Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague, is among the highest in Europe, and the concentrations of ozone and nitrogen dioxide are linked to premature deaths.

Although the Netherlands is praised as a pioneer in the area of mapping and assessing ecosystems and their management, and on developing a natural capital accounting systems, significant problems remain. The most serious problems involve habitat fragmentation and biodiversity loss, atmospheric nitrogen deposition, desiccation and acidification. Over the last 25 years, about 140 species inhabiting the North Sea have suffered a 30% decline, mainly due to recently forbidden commercial fishing techniques.

Citation:

The EU Environmental Implementation Review Country Report - THE NETHERLANDS, February 2017
PBL, 2014, Nationale Energieverkenning 2014 (pbl.nl)
PBL, 3 June 2015, "Transitie naar schone economie in 2015 vergt scherpere klimaatdoelen voor 2030" (pal.nl. consulted 26 October 2015)
Algemene Rekenkamer, Rapport Stimulering van duurzame energieproductie (SDE+). Haalbaarheid en betaalbaarheid van beleidsdoelen, 16 April 2015 (rekenkamer.nl, consulted 26 October 2015)
<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/10/30/cbs-30-procent-minder-zeedieren-in-noordzee-a1579244> (consulted 2 november 2017)
"De rechter verplichtte de staat tot meer klimaatactie. Wat is er met het vonnis gebeurd?", Jelmer Mommers, in De Correspondent, 17 September 2015.
WRR-Policy Brief 5, Klimaatbeleid voor de lange termijn: van vrijblijvend naar verankerd, October 2016
Ecofys, De impact van de Nationale Klimaattop 2016 in kaart, 26 October 2016

Romania

- Score 5 Despite its membership in the EU, Romania continues to struggle with developing and implementing comprehensive environmental regulations. In the period under review, progress with combating illegal logging and with waste management, the core focus of Romanian environmental policy, has been made. The National Environmental Guard (GNM), Romania's central environmental protection agency, and its waste management subcontractors collaborated to develop an information

sharing app aimed at improving waste traceability and improving Romania's implementation of the EU Strategy and Legislation on Hazardous Waste and Chemicals. The new program is operated under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, implemented by the GNM and was developed in partnership with a Norwegian company. Enhancing the government's ability to monitor hazardous waste is an important step in holding polluters accountable and improving the country's waste management. Notwithstanding these achievements, the GNM remains an ineffective government institution whose leaders have been accused of involvement in corruption, squandering money on unnecessary training programs, and of neglecting the implementation of environment protection legislation. In the first seven months of 2017, GNM carried out 10% fewer control raids than in the same period in 2016. Throughout 2017, the Ministry of Environment has also reintroduced legislation that would allow the controversial Rosca Montana mining project to restart. Street protests against the Tudose government's perceived intention to facilitate the restart of the mining project have been organized in early September. The protests did not prevent the government from introducing in parliament in October 2017 a controversial law on mining.

Slovakia

Score 5

Slovakia has 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 helped draw attention to environmental issues, and EU accession has come with the obligation to meet the European Union's strict environmental standards, this negative legacy is still present in policymaking. As a result, each government's approach to environmental issues has tended to be patchy rather than holistic. A second major problem has been the weak implementation of environmental laws and regulations. A third problem is the country's strong industrial production, which keeps energy demand high. Although the Fico government relies heavily on nuclear power, carbon dioxide emissions increased in 2016. The planned completion of the third and fourth nuclear power plant in Mochovce has been postponed several times, and is planned for 2018 and 2019 respectively. Nuclear power stations keep generating the highest share of electricity in Slovakia (53.8%). Fossil fuels account for 19.4%, hydropower for 17.7% and renewables for 8.9%. Slovakia has not developed a supply of wind energy. Slovak legislation and regulation hinders the installation of small wind turbines that generate electricity for households, and there are only two small wind parks in the country.

Citation:

European Environment Agency (2017): Trends and projections 2017. Tracking progress toward climate and energy targets – Slovakia. Copenhagen (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate/trends-and-projections-in-europe/trends-and-projections-in-europe-2017/country-profiles-greenhouse-gases-and-energy>).

Liptáková, J. (2017): Slovakia to boost the utilization of renewables, in: Slovak Spectator, November 13, 2017 (<https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20648728/slovakia-to-boost-the-utilisation-of-renewables.html>).

South Korea

Score 5

South Korea remains an environmentally unsustainable growth-first and car-first society. Environmental policies are currently insufficient to protect the environment or preserve the sustainability of resources. Environmental problems are very serious, particularly with regard to air quality. In the 2016 Yale Environmental Performance Index, Korea was ranked 80th out of 180 countries overall, falling to just 173rd place in terms of air quality. The level of atmospheric PM2.5 – tiny air-pollutant particles small enough to penetrate deep into the respiratory system and can cause a variety of illnesses such as cancer – is 29.1 micrograms per cubic meter, the OECD's highest level, compared to an OECD average of 14.05 micrograms per cubic meter. By March 2017, there had been 85 fine dust warnings in Korea, more than twice the number of the previous year. While some of this pollution originates in China, most is homegrown, with sources including vehicle emissions, industrial sites and power plants. The share of energy production accounted for by renewables is the second-lowest in the OECD.

South Korea is the fifth-largest producer of nuclear energy in the world, with its 24 reactors generating about 30% of the country's electricity. During the presidential campaign, Moon Jae-in pledged to phase out coal and nuclear energy due to public concerns over air pollution and nuclear safety, and proposed to increase the share of renewables to 20% of total power generation by 2030. In October 2017, however, President Moon reversed his course and announced that he would resume the construction of two nuclear reactors that had been temporarily halted since mid-July, although he promised that no new plants after these would be constructed.

On a positive note, the quality of public transportation, especially in Seoul, is steadily improving, and the country also has a high recycling rate. Nevertheless, most urban development projects continue to prioritize cars, buildings are poorly insulated and energy use continues to be subsidized.

Citation:

The Diplomat. "South Korea's Nuclear Energy Debate." October 26, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/south-koreas-nuclear-energy-debate/>

World Nuclear News. "South Korean President Accepts Public Decision." October 23, 2017. <http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/np-South-Korean-president-accepts-public-decision-2310175.html>

Financial Times. "South Korea Joins Ranks of World's Most Polluted Countries." March 29, 2017.

Spain

Score 5

Spain enjoys exceptionally diverse natural habitats; however, government policy has not provided sufficient safeguards regarding sustainability and general environmental quality. Concerning climate, a report released by the international NGO WWF shows a decrease in greenhouse-gas emissions since 2008. During 2017,

the new Spanish government was still drawing up a bill on climate change and energy transition.

More worrisomely, the Spanish government has aggressively rolled back economic incentives for renewable energy development since 2011, while in 2015, the Ministry of Industry and Energy announced new fees on consumers who use batteries to store electric power produced by their own solar panels. After Iberdrola announced in 2017 the closure of its last coal plants, the Spanish government declared it might attempt to keep them open. Decisions such as these have jeopardized Spain's previous leadership role with regard to solar power and wind energy. As the country is extremely dependent on external energy supplies, government strategy during the period under review was aimed at encouraging energy savings through a pricing policy. Air quality remains a big problem in big capitals such as Madrid and Barcelona, but local governments in both cities say to be determined to reduce pollution. Regarding water resources, Spain was one of the few EU member states to delay completion of its river-basin management plans and the European Commission has recently taken the country to the EU Court of Justice for not properly treating waste water. In terms of protecting natural resources and biodiversity, the assessment is mixed. On the one hand, the reform of the Sea Coast Law (Ley de Costas) in 2013 deregulated some coastal activities which will likely lead to the resumption of coastal construction projects. On the other hand, the recent expansion of the network of national parks continued the trend of improving safeguards for wildlife ecosystems.

Citation:

April 2017, NPR: "In Madrid, A Plan To Fight Pollution By Shifting Away From Diesel-Run Cars"
<https://www.npr.org/section/s/parallels/2017/04/06/522587216/in-madrid-a-plan-to-fight-pollution-by-shifting-away-from-diesel-run-cars>

May 2017, Clar F. and Álvarez R.: "Private Vehicle and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Spain: A War Without Winner."
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-54984-2_7

May 2017, Speech by President of the Government at inauguration of Workshop on future Climate Change and Energy Transition Act <http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/presidente/intervenciones/Paginas/2017/20170525-speech.aspx>

October 2017, Climate Score Card: "Strategies for Strengthening Country Pledges to the Paris Agreement"
<http://climatescorecard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ClimateScorecardReport14.pdf>

Australia

Score 4

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 topic of great public debate.

Environmental policy in Australia has focused very much in recent years on climate

change and water security. Some progress has been made on water security in recent years, including building desalination plants and creating the Murray-Darling Basin water management plan. However, energy consumption is generally high and, despite great potential for solar and wind energy, the contribution of renewable energy to the grid remains relatively low.

Australia's infrastructure continues to be stretched thin, a fact contributing to the rising carbon emissions. Public transport in Australian cities is less developed than in comparable European or Asian cities. Investment in infrastructure will have to be a key component in Australia's environmental policy in the next decades, but despite the obvious shortcomings investment in new infrastructure is modest.

One of the early acts of Prime Minister Abbott's Liberal-National coalition government was to abolish the carbon tax introduced by the previous Labor government in 2012, which ceased to apply from 1 July 2014. The government remains committed to reducing carbon emissions by 26% to 28% compared to 2005 levels by 2030, but with no effective means of achieving this. However, the government commissioned a review of the national electricity market which was released in June 2017. Most of the recommendations of the review were accepted, and while it is unlikely subsidies will be introduced for renewable energy, experts believe that adoption of the recommendations will lead to increased renewable energy production, as well as increased energy security and lower electricity prices.

Biodiversity decline is also 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>

Murray-Darling Basin Authority: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/>

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In Australien herrscht wegen der Volatilität der Strompreise und der sich häufenden Blackouts eine Energiekrise, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 11. Mai 2017.

Tesla to build world's biggest lithium ion battery in South Australia, The Guardian, 7. Juli 2017, im Internet unter <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/07/tesla-to-build-worlds-biggest-lithium-ion-battery-in-south-australia>

Electricity Market Review: <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/1d6b0464-6162-4223-ac08-3395a6b1c7fa/files/electricity-market-review-final-report.pdf>

Croatia

Score 4

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, implementation of the envisaged measures has progressed slowly. A case in point is waste management. In July 2016, the European Commission pursued a legal action within its infringements package against Croatia for failing to comply with its obligations under EU environmental law. The Commission requested that Croatia bring its national laws on waste into full conformity with EU rules, particularly with Directive 2008/98/EC. The Directive aims to minimize the negative effects of waste generation and management on human health and the environment. The Commission identified a number of defects in Croatia's transposition of the Directive and sent the Croatian government a formal notice on that issue. It stated that none of the fundamental requirements in waste management had been completed, including requirements on waste management permits, the waste management plan and waste prevention program as well as detailed rules on inspections. The critique by the Commission raised fears that Croatia would lose access to important EU funds. In early 2017, the government adopted a new medium-term waste management plan that has accommodated the Commission's concerns.

Citation:

European Commission (2017): The EU Environmental Implementation Review Country Report Croatia. SWD (2017) 45 final, Brussels (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report_hr_en.pdf).

Cyprus

Score 4

The absence of a comprehensive and coherent policy, dispersed responsibilities and a lack of political will for environmental protection place Cyprus very low on many relevant EU ratings. The country has failed to meet its EU, despite pressures from local and international organizations. Despite awareness-raising efforts and pressure from environmental groups since the late 1980s, threats to the environment continue as authorities favor projects with high environmental impacts. Moreover, representatives from both public and private institutions have asked Brussels to relax environment protection rules.

The country's response to demands for climate protection remains insufficient in many respects. According to the European Commission (2017), promising plans to reduce gas emissions require more action, including a reduction in fuel dependency and access to good public transportation infrastructure. The use of environmentally friendly energy showed progress recently. The Commission also points to eco-

innovation as an opportunity for development, since Cyprus currently ranks 26th.

According to the Commission, one of the three major environmental challenges is water management because of Cyprus's dependency on rainfall and extraction. Desalination and limited wastewater reuse are present, but these also have negative effects. The illegal drilling for water and government's promotion of water-hungry projects such as golf courses also negatively impact efforts toward effective water management.

Forest protection under a national program for the 2010 – 2020 period aims at reforestation, the reduction of fire hazards, and protection from pollution and other risks. However, the Commission considers the adequate protection of Natura 2000 areas as a second major challenge. Before approving projects, the government should ensure proper impact assessments are carried out. Areas such as the Akamas peninsula are shrinking and placed at risk by government decisions and the activities of private developers. Local authorities and communities often rally with developers in seeking profit at the expense of environmental protection.

Waste management, including avoiding the expansion of landfills, is a third major challenge. The Commission has threatened Cyprus with sanctions if the waste management problem remains unresolved.

In addition to public authorities reluctant to protect the environment, the economic crisis has been used as a pretext for the relaxation of environmental rules. New land development projects are having additional negative effects on ecosystems. A 2017 law leaves the door open for the privatization of beaches. Political expediency continued in 2017 with the failure to effectively enforce rules against illegal hunting that threaten protected species.

The Commission did praise Cyprus for the quality of its bathing water and expansive size of Natura 2000 areas (29%). This size is largely due to the extensive area of the Troodos mountains.

Citation:

1. EU Commission, Environmental Implementation Review, Cyprus, 2017, Environmental Implementation Review
2. New Law leads to Privatisation of Beaches, Opinion, Cyprus Mail, 28 September 2017, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/09/28/view-new-law-lead-privatisation-beaches/>

Greece

Score 4

Because of the economic crisis, between 2010 and 2015, industrial production and greenhouse gas emissions in Greece declined. Yet, Greece has not made enough progress in producing and using renewable energy, even though physical conditions (sunshine, winds) should have facilitated a shift to renewable energy sources. Greek state authorities are undecided on this policy shift.

Meanwhile, municipalities are incapable or unwilling to practice material recycling and thus Greece scores low on that dimension. The performance of Greece regarding the share of municipal waste that is recycled is rather low (16% of total municipal waste), and recycling has been increasing only modestly during the past 15 years.

In the period under review, a small Greek oil tanker overturned and spilled oil in the Saronic gulf, on the east coast of Attica. The response of the Greek authorities was slow and inadequate, and the waters and beaches of Athens became heavily polluted. Further, in the summer of 2017, wildfires caused extensive destruction to forests in northeast Attica, very close to Athens.

At the root of Greece's environmental problems lie several causes: the lack of state mechanisms capable of controlling sources of pollution, unchecked urban development, large infrastructure projects and negligent consumer behavior. Environmental and forest management is haphazard, and subject to the vicissitudes of changing political leaderships and interests.

Indeed, in Greece, the development of tourism and agriculture has often proceeded in a haphazard manner, and has always taken priority over environmental concerns. Public works and town planning have always been afforded priority over environmental protection. The result has been that none of the three targets of environmental protection – climate, renewable water sources and forest area biodiversity – have ever been pursued in a systematic fashion.

To sum up, despite the fact that some members of the current government are ecologically aware, the natural environment in Greece continues to be systematically neglected. In the period under review, the situation worsened because of a major oil spill and forest fires. However, regarding environmental sustainability, and given its conducive geographical morphology (long coastline) and helpful weather conditions (sunshine, winds blowing in the Aegean sea), Greece certainly has the potential for improvement.

Citation:

Data on Greece's performance regarding renewable energy sources, waste generation and recycling is drawn on the SGI database available on this platform.

European Environmental Agency, Greece: Country Briefing (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/countries/greece>)

Malta

Score 4

Malta's environmental challenges are complicated by large population density, a constant challenge to create employment opportunities, attract foreign investment and improve standards of living. As an EU member state, Malta is bound to fulfill key climate targets within the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Only 5% of Malta's energy consumption was obtained from renewable energy sources; ongoing

efforts are required to ensure that the established national target of 10% is met. An EU report on climate and energy targets indicates that Malta is one of the member states that is experiencing difficulties in staying on track on renewable energy, energy efficiency and emissions not covered by the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. This is largely a result of the continued high dependence on cars, the growing dependency on air conditioning and the slow reduction of the island country's green lung. Consequently, Malta is buying Bulgaria's extra emission allowances.

Several initiatives aimed at fulfilling the targets have been undertaken. These include the generation of photovoltaic power, setting up of photovoltaic farms, construction of an interconnected electricity system with Sicily, promotion of fuel-efficient cars and construction of a gas-fired power station. Also, the building of a new waste management plant, projected to cost €150 million, is in the pipeline. New regulations have been introduced to strengthen the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure. The effect of these initiatives will primarily be felt in the future. Also, an assessment of government spending indicates that less is being spent on the environment than in previous years.

Fresh water is a scarce resource in Malta, yet until recently the government's approach to this important issue was inconsistent and in general inadequate to protect the island country's water reserves. The production of water for domestic and commercial use is heavily dependent on reverse-osmosis plants. To relieve pressure from reverse-osmosis water generation, a National Flood Relief Project was concluded at the end of 2015 with the aim of increasing the amount of water collected annually. Government re-piping has also reduced loss of water from leaky pipes by 35%, though theft still accounts for a loss of between a 1/5 and 1/4 of total production. Moreover, the 2015-2021 Water Catchment Management Plan for Malta identifies several key measures that need to be implemented if optimal water conservation is to be attained.

The Maltese countryside is protected from unsustainable development through a regulatory process of permits and enforcement. Proposed amendments to the environment impact assessment regulation in order to correct identified and persistent shortcomings have been made. Nonetheless, EU data extracted in 2016 highlighted the fact that Malta (together with Belgium) had the highest proportion of developed areas, coupled with the highest population density among the EU member states. The number of building permits has increased in the last two years, though it has not reached the high of 2007. However, the number of outside development zone (ODZ) permits granted by 5 April 2017 was up 74% over the previous year. The Malta Environmental and Planning Authority (MEPA) has been restructured and is now divided into two separate entities (Planning Authority and Environment and Resource Authority) which are respectively responsible for planning and environmental issues. However, this split and many of the related changes have generated considerable controversy, including increased ministerial powers in the selection of board members, reducing the autonomy and independence of these

boards and the strange anomaly that allows a representative of the environmental authority to sit on the planning authority boards only when invited to do so.

The government has introduced various policies to preserve Malta's biodiversity, as the small island country 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. However, a recent decision to extend the hours for hunters to 12:00 in the Majjistral Nature and History Park, Malta's first national park, against the unanimous objection of the advisory board undermines these policies. Also, the introduction of a fuel service station policy deemed to be negatively impacting virgin land is now being reassessed.

Citation:

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Poland

Score 4

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 be given priority over protection of the environment. All 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, an issue that has taken on even greater prominence since the Ukrainian crisis, and have resisted attempts by the European Union to tighten targets for the reduction of carbon emission. For the PiS government, coal, gas and nuclear energy have been the prime energy sources, whereas renewables account for a meager 1%. Three new coal power stations are being built in Opole, Jaworzno and Kozienice, and the government has announced plans to erect a new nuclear-power station by 2029. It is also very eager to explore and produce shale gas. Since the drilling began without an impact assessment, the European Commission took Poland to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg for breaking EU environment law in May 2017. The heavy reliance on coal has strong negative effects. According to the World Health Organization, 33 of the 50 most-polluted towns in Europe in 2016 are in Poland. On 17 January 2017, all schools in Poland were closed due to high levels of smog.

The government's disregard for environmental issues is reflected in another ongoing conflict on the Białowieża primeval forest. This is a protected Natura 2000 site, but the government started to cut down a considerable number of trees, arguing that this was necessary because the bark beetle would otherwise destroy the whole forest. This provoked protests by environmentalists, who claimed the logging was not needed to fight the beetle but was only done for economic interests, and then mobilized the European Commission. Since the logging did not stop, the European Commission launched an infringement procedure against Poland in April 2016 and finally the issue went up to the European Court of Justice who also asked the Polish government to stop the cuts. In November 2016, the court said the ban on logging should be upheld until its final decision in early 2018, if it continues a fine of €100,000 per day will be demanded.

Citation:

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Turkey

Score 4

Sustainable development policies gained in importance in Turkey as part of the EU accession process, which involved the country taking steps forward in environmental policy and legislation. The environmental chapter (Chapter 27) of the EU acquis was opened in 2009. In terms of environmental impact assessments, Turkey is generally in line with EU environmental legislation. In recent years, considerable progress has been made toward establishing emissions controls, the use of renewable energies and promoting energy efficiency. In the 2016 Environmental Performance Index, Turkey was ranked 99 out of 180 countries. In the 2017 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), Turkey was described as showing "very poor performance" and was ranked 51 out of 61 countries falling one position compared to the previous year.

Turkey adopted the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (IPA II) in December 2015. Thus, budget implementation tasks for IPA funds' management, including

environment and climate action, have been assigned. In April 2016, Turkey joined the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. However, it has not yet connected to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism's common emergency communication and information system. Court decisions related to the environment are not in harmony with the Aarhus Convention. Also, the Strategic Environmental Assessments Directive is still pending. Recently, the government decided that environmental impact assessments would not be considered for strategically important investment projects from September 2016. This will have a negative impact on *acquis* implementation. Finally, Turkey has signed, ratified and is fulfilling its commitments under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Progress has also been made in terms of regulating air quality and industrial pollution, though it will take time and considerable funding to fully implement this legislation. On 2 April 2015, the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning adopted a new regulation on waste management based on the EU Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC).

The framework legislation on nature protection and the national biodiversity strategy and action plan have not been adopted, and there are legal shortcomings, not in line with the *acquis*, in relation to wetlands, forests and natural sites. Areas such as industrial pollution and risk management, chemicals and noise need either effective regulation in line with international standards or effective implementation.

Citation:

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United States

Score 4 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, requires the implementation of 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 his 2008 and 2012 election campaigns, President Obama promised to make effective action on climate change a major priority. In 2009-2010, he pushed for a

major cap-and-trade bill, but the measure failed in the Senate. Nevertheless, a number of constructive developments occurred. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has imposed several major measures, including increased fuel-economy standards for cars and light trucks, and carbon standards for new coal plants.

In November 2015, President Obama announced that the United States was rejecting the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline that would have carried bitumen produced from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, for processing into oil in Texas. Because producing oil from tar sands has high energy costs, environmentalists criticized the project as undermining the effort to reduce carbon emissions.

The Trump administration has been a rapidly escalating disaster for environmental policy. Trump has embraced an extreme version of climate-change denial and declared that the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement. Although some of the more liberal states will attempt to continue reducing carbon emissions, no national action can be expected during Trump's presidency. Indeed, Trump has promised to rejuvenate the coal-mining industry, an economic absurdity.

Meanwhile, Trump has appointed hard-liner opponents of environmental regulation from industry to top environmental positions. His EPA has ordered the cancellation of numerous Obama-era environmental regulations – actions that may, in the end, be struck down by the courts. It has decimated the EPA's scientific and expert staff – with more than 200 already departed. In addition, the Trump EPA is unlikely to enforce many regulations that remain on the books.

Address | Contact

Bertelsmann Stiftung
Carl-Bertelsmann-Straße 256
33311 Gütersloh
Germany
Phone +49 5241 81-0

Dr. Daniel Schraad-Tischler
Phone +49 5241 81-81240
daniel.schraad-tischler@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Dr. Christof Schiller
Phone +49 5241 81-81470
christof.schiller@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Dr. Thorsten Hellmann
Phone +49 5241 81-81236
thorsten.hellmann@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Pia Paulini
Phone +49 5241 81-81468
pia.paulini@bertelsmann-stiftung.de

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de
www.sgi-network.org