

LATVIA



Progress Towards Environmental Sustainability

MDG7

Latvia's total energy consumption is the lowest in the European Union – 2,600/kWh per capita per year due to several factors. Latvia has no energy-intensive industrial sub-sectors, and services make up the largest sector of the national economy (72.7%). Also, the relatively low incomes of the population restrict private consumption.

One of Latvia's priorities is to reduce the volume of ozone-depleting greenhouse gases emitted by transportation vehicles. This will be achieved through efficient use of energy resources. At present, decoupling is weak: pollutant emissions are increasing and energy consumption is not significantly declining. To meet EU requirements, Latvia must reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by 8% as compared to 1990. It is quite likely that Latvia will meet this requirement by applying energy efficiency measures, carrying out clean-technology projects and trading emission quotas.

Over-fishing of the main industrial fish species (sprats, herring, cod, salmon) and unfavorable conditions in the Baltic Sea in recent years have contributed to a reduction of fish stocks. This means smaller catches and negative economic and social indicators.

Although globally the proportion of land area covered by forests shrank to 30% in 2000, in Latvia 45% of the country is covered by forests. Latvia is one of the most wooded countries in Europe, with per capita forest area exceeding the European average 4.5 times. Forests play a major role in the Latvian economy, as they reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and they provide opportunities for recreation.

Up until 2001, there were 243 protected areas in Latvia, which covered 8.9% of the country. In 2001–2004, the proportion of protected areas increased by 3.2%. In 2004, the protected area network in Latvia incorporated 337 protected areas, 295 natural monuments, and 649 micro reserves.

QUICK FACTS

Total UNDP-GEF and Co-Finance:	\$46,477,309
Total MPU and Bilateral:	\$20,000
Total:	\$46,497,309
Cumulative Total ODS Phased-Out:	224 ODP tonnes

The European Union has launched a long-term process to ensure sustainable development, with special focus on the use of renewable energy resources, and the integration of environmental questions into other sectoral policies, laws and funding regulations. Other important initiatives for environmental sustainability in Latvia are: development of science and research, introduction of entrepreneurs to best practice, ecolabelling, green procurement and environmental analysis systems, redistribution of the tax burden, introduction of higher taxes on natural resources and other economic instruments to increase the efficiency of resources.¹

SPOTLIGHT



Phasing-out POPs to protect the environment and human health²

Persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, are chemicals such as pesticides, industrial chemicals, and unwanted by-products of industrial processes or combustion. These chemical substances circulate globally, and can cause cancer, damage people's immune systems, and tarnish species and ecosystems, both adjacent to and distant from their emission source. The Stockholm Convention was adopted in 2001 to protect human health and the environment from POPs. UNDP seeks to assist developing countries in building the technical capacity to properly destroy obsolete stocks of POPs and remediate POPs-contaminated sites.

UNDP-GEF is currently assisting Latvia to meet its obligations under the Convention, by phasing-out POPs and managing contaminated areas in an environmentally sound manner. A GEF-supported project of US\$ 378,600 was provided for two years commencing in 2002 to assist the Latvian Government to develop its POPs National Implementation Plan (NIP) under the Stockholm Convention. The main objectives of the project are to create sustainable capacity and ownership in Latvia to effectively manage POPs chemicals and wastes, while simultaneously supporting awareness raising in the general population on understanding the negative impact of POPs on human health. Project activities include: legal assessment and awareness raising, compilation of initial inventories and capacity assessment, POPs elimination priority setting, evaluation of management options and drafting of and national endorsement of the NIP. The project also enabled the first research to be conducted in Latvia on levels of dioxins and PCBs in breast milk.

Under the project, POPs and PCB pesticide polluted and potentially polluted site assessments and evaluations have been conducted and a public-awareness campaign on POPs was completed in June 2004. In addition, a nationwide campaign against burning of old grass was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Environment to reduce emissions of dioxins into the atmosphere. Finally, the NIP was adopted by the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers in March 2005, and is the first to be posted on the Stockholm Convention website.

Latvia has addressed the issue of integrating the environment into other sectors in its National Environmental Policy Plan. In this context, it has continued to implement the action programme for sustainable development. UNDP assists Latvia in raising national capacity for the implementation of international climate change conventions and promoting biodiversity with the support of GEF. The country's environmental protection control system has been strengthened and administrative capacity has been increased, particularly at the regional and local level.



Inita Paulovica, Officer in Charge

PORTFOLIO

FSSD* GEF is working to help Latvia's NCSA identify priorities and needs for capacity development in Latvia in order to address global environment issues. The sustainable institutional system created will ensure continuity of the capacity building needs assessment in a comprehensive and systematic way. GEF and UNDP are also working to support the development of capacities in education and research for strengthening global environmental management in Latvia.

ENERGY GEF supports renewable energy initiatives in Latvia which have facilitated the development of financially and environmentally sustainable energy companies in 14 municipalities to transform from the use of heavy fuel oil to biomass. A solid knowledge base has been built for continued work on building public awareness for residents and an excellent training program implemented on sustainable energy initiatives for technical and administrative personnel in municipalities. A billing system pilot project was developed and replicated; a national strategy on renewable district heating was developed. Knowledge from the UNDP-driven project is being used as a basis for the development of further projects in the area of renewable energy.

LAND GEF is supporting the creation of sustainable capacity and ownership in Latvia to mitigate land degradation and thereby meet the country's obligations under UNCCD. It focuses on capacity building in particular and the removal of key barriers to sustainable land management in Latvia.

BIODIVERSITY GEF biodiversity projects have promoted sustainable use of natural resources, at the same time protecting nature by regulating nature protection at the State, municipal and public levels to ensure implementation of international commitments which also contribute to sustainable human development. The development of a biodiversity strategy and action plan under GEF formed the basis of the National Biodiversity Programme adopted by the Government in 2000. The GEF also supported the development of a monitoring programme and the preparation of the First, Second and Third National Reports to the CBD. UNDP and GEF are working to ensure conservation of globally significant biodiversity in the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve by implementing a set of initiatives required to integrate biodiversity conservation principles and practices into the planning, management and sustainable use of the Reserve.

CHEMICALS As part of its support programme to ensure compliance with Montreal Protocol measures, UNDP is assisting Latvia through implementation of a GEF-funded project that provides technical assistance and provision of ODS-friendly equipment to enterprises that represent the bulk of the ODS consumers in the country. In addition, the GEF is also funding an enabling activity project for Latvia. The project has achieved the development of a National Implementation Plan for POPs in March 2005. Latvia is also participating in a regional GEF-funded project, managed by UNEP in partnership with UNDP, that aims to rapidly phase-out all non-exempted uses of methyl bromide (MB). Latvia is one of seven countries involved in a global GEF project aimed at reducing environmental release of dioxins and mercury by demonstrating and promoting best techniques and practices for reducing and managing health care waste.

CONTACTS

Ms. Silvija Kalnins – silvija.kalnins@undp.riga.lv
Tel. 371-750-3600 (direct 688)
Fax 371-750-3601 http://www.undp.lv/?object_id=490

PARTNERS

Some of our Partners working with UNDP and the Government in Latvia

EU
Government of The Netherlands
Denmark
Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Regional Development and Local Authorities, Economy, Health
Latvian Environment Investment Fund

¹MDGR 2005 http://www.undg.org/documents/6160-Latvia_MDG_Report.pdf; [†]UNDP POPs website: http://www.undp.org/gef/undp-gef_focal_areas_of_action/sub_persistent_organic_pollutants.html;
[‡]UNDP Latvia Project Document; GEF Online database: <http://www.gefonline.org/projectDetails.cfm?projID=1668>; *Frameworks and Strategies for Sustainable Development