



# Environmental signals 2002

## *Benchmarking the Millennium*



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# EEA indicator reports provide signals on:

- trends in the state of the environment and the pressures acting upon it
- eco-efficiency - the 'decoupling' of economic activity from environmental pressures and use of natural resources
- the integration of environmental policies into other policy areas
- relative country performance ('benchmarking')
- progress made towards fulfilling objectives and targets (environmental 'fixes')



# The situation today

## Uneven progress in relieving pressures on environment

- Positive overall trends in GHG emissions & waste, confirmed reductions in water & air pollution
- **BUT** many countries and some sectors are not contributing to positive trends
- Pressures still growing on some natural resources, especially fish stocks and land



# The situation today

**Positive overall trends in pressures, but their impact still a concern (time-lags, emissions from past and elsewhere)**

Consequently:

- Large areas of natural habitats and farm land still exposed to acidification and ozone (>60 %)
- Little sign that eutrophication is becoming less of a problem in coastal waters
- Substantial proportion of urban population still exposed to high levels of ground-level ozone (>50 % long term) and fine particles (20-40 %)



# “Dematerialising” the economy

**Improving quality of life while consuming less energy & materials (decoupling): some progress but far from enough**

- Some sectors are not contributing
  - energy and resource consumption by households
  - greenhouse gas emissions from transport and tourism (50 % of transport energy use)
  
- Some pressures still closely tied to economic growth
  - land and soil degradation
  - overfishing
  - municipal waste generation



# Greening energy

## EU is using energy more efficiently but not reducing consumption in absolute terms

- Some countries use energy much better than others - Energy intensity still growing in a few EU countries
- Successful expansion of renewable energy during the 1990s (14 % of electricity) but undermined by overall increase in consumption of energy (1 % yearly)
- On current trends, shares of renewables in energy consumption and electricity consumption will fall short of EU's indicative targets for 2010

## Signs of change

- Success stories of wind energy in Germany, Spain, Denmark



# Ensuring sustainable transport

## Current trends moving away from EU objectives

- No break in the link between economic and transport growth
- No shift in transport use from road to rail, water and public passenger transport
  - Combined with little improvements in energy efficiency, these trends result in growing energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and urban nuisances (air quality, noise)

## Signs of change

- Push for demand-side management via taxation (some move towards tax structures that differentiate between the various modes but significant barriers to implementation remain)





# Households - lack of attention

## Consumption levels continued to rise in parallel with disposable incomes during 1990s

- household energy use +10 %
  - waste generation +14 %
  - car ownership +17 %
- Yet, households' contribution to environmental pressures is often overlooked in policy while they grow in number

## Signs of change

- Eco-labelling and information dissemination are growing but remain marginal and unevenly implemented in Member States





# Tackling climate change

## Greenhouse gas emissions

- Total EU: -3.5 % between 1990 and 2000, but half of this cut is due to one-off changes in Germany and UK
- Less positive: EU emissions rose between 1999 and 2000 (CO<sub>2</sub>: +0.5 % - other GHG: +0.3 %)

## Some countries & sectors are not contributing

- On current trends, nine EU Member States will significantly exceed their Kyoto Protocol emissions targets for 2008-2012
- Emissions from transport: +30 % by 2010 due to growth in transport volume and shift to road and aviation



# Biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources

## Fisheries

- Continued overfishing, despite fleet cuts, is putting many commercially important fish stocks at high risk of collapse, i.e. outside safe biological limits:
  - . 62-91 % in the North East Atlantic
  - . 75 % in the Baltic Sea
  - . 65-70 % in the Mediterranean Sea
  - . spawning stocks of North Sea cod reached a historic low in 2001
- EU fleet capacity (tonnage) decreased by 7 % while EFTA fleet increased by 31 % during the 1990s



# Biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources

## Land - Widespread conflicts over the use of European land

- Built-up area ('urban sprawl') expanded by 20 % over last two decades, far faster than population growth (6 %)
- Subsequent covering/loss of soil ('soil sealing'): e.g. additional 7 to 12 m<sup>2</sup>/person of soil area sealed every year (estimates for Austria & Germany)
- During 1990s, every day, about 10 hectares of land were taken for motorway construction in the EU
- These trends have caused loss or significant fragmentation of natural areas in most of Europe



# Biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources

## Forests

- Total area is increasing and annual tree felling rates in Europe are considered sustainable. However:
  - Uneven distribution in production forest and conservation forest
  - Increased afforestation is not always positive for biodiversity
  - Total area of non-fragmented large forest ecosystems is decreasing
- With some exceptions European forests are planted mainly with indigenous species
- Condition of European forests is a concern, with continuous deterioration between 1986-1995 and about 25 % of the trees sampled damaged today



# Conclusion:

## The *Environmental signals series*

- Third report in the series means EEA's annual reporting on the state of the environment is now well established
- Annual assessments allow regular benchmarking of progress in environment and in integrating environment into other policies, as well as towards more sustainable development
- Main value lies in identification of underlying trends & provision of early warnings



# Conclusion:

## The conditions for change

- No major changes in the state of the environment since the first *Environmental Signals* in 2000
- BUT to some extent the conditions for change are emerging which need to be reinforced if they are to provide / ensure positive changes on the long-term
  - Decoupling of use of some natural resources and environmental pressures from the economy
  - Reinforcing means (tools) for sustainability. Still very slow and restricted progress, such as in tax reform (for internalisation of environmental costs). No progress in sustainability without proper taxation





## The conditions for change (2)

- Shift in the policy framework - More and new policies, as well as in the way to foster sustainability
  - Adoption of EU Sustainable Development Strategy as overarching framework (mid-term)
  - Finalisation of Sixth Environment Action Programme, with thematic strategies (embracing legislation but also beyond)
  - Continuation of “Cardiff Process” of integrating environment into sectoral policies (slow progress so far)
- The related governance principles (coherence, openness, effectiveness, participation, accountability) are progressively being enforced
- 'Where there is will there is a way!' - The political will have to be maintained (The 'Gothenburg push' - The 'Barcelona halt')