

# Implementing Good Practices and Solutions for Environmental Protection through UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews



Stimulating peer learning on the development and implementation of environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in lower and upper middle-income countries

## Challenge

Environmental concerns are rarely high on the agenda of governments in lower and middle-income countries, leading to weak national environmental institutions and insufficient environmental policies. In some countries, national environmental authorities are subordinated to sectoral ministries. In others, their hierarchical level is below that of the sectoral ministries. Progress is slow in integrating environmental requirements into sectoral policies (e.g., introduction of measures to improve water and energy efficiency, promote renewable energy sources or clean the vehicle fleet). Inadequate funding is allocated to implement environmental policies and measures, compared with economic and social policies. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires concerted actions by all sectors and stakeholders.

## Towards a Solution

The Environmental Performance Review (EPR) Programme fosters dialogue, exchange of good practices and peer learning among governments of the lower and upper middle-income countries in the UNECE region on ongoing and emerging environmental challenges and proposed solutions to tackle them. It equips governments with targeted recommendations to improve environmental policies and strengthen the integration of environmental concerns in sectoral policies. The recommendations for one country are based on good practices and solutions that often are applicable and transferable to other countries participating in the programme. Since 2017, the recommendations have been aligned to nationalized SDGs and SDG targets.

The EPR process is well defined, based on many years of experience and lessons learned. It is also demand-driven, ensuring that recommendations receive due consideration and are implemented by governments. It includes a strong peer learning component that is particularly valuable for sharing knowledge and experiences among lower and upper middle-income countries.

The EPR methodology offers independent and impartial review and a participatory approach. The review is carried out by a team composed of experts from countries other than the country reviewed, with strong participation by the country under review. This participation involves all stakeholders (central and local government, NGOs, business, and academia) at various stages of the process (providing data and information, commenting on the draft report, and participating in expert and peer reviews).

**EPRs represent a mechanism for the systemic transfer of good practice, in particular between lower and upper middle-income countries of the UNECE region. Such transfer takes place through peer learning during several stages in the EPR preparation process.** They include:

- **Review mission:** The review team, which is composed of experts from various countries and international organizations, facilitates exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices. For example, the review team for the third EPR of Albania included



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experts from Belarus and Montenegro. This peer-to-peer exchange promotes further contacts and collaboration;

- **Expert Review:** During the review of the draft EPR, expert representatives from UNECE Member States discuss the EPR report with the delegation of the reviewed country. For example, in 2018, the Expert Group included Belarus, Georgia, Montenegro and Kazakhstan (as an observer). Members of the Expert Group from lower and upper middle-income countries are usually actively engaged as they face similar issues to the reviewed country. During the expert review, experts share what works and does not work in their countries to develop solutions to improve the situation in the reviewed country; and
- **Peer Review:** The intergovernmental session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy brings the international peer learning dimension to EPR. UNECE Member States share their collective knowledge and expertise in discussions about the draft EPR with policymakers of the reviewed Member States. The country benefits from this comprehensive international expertise in implementing the EPR recommendations.

In addition, the transfer of good practices, particularly between lower and upper middle-income countries, takes place in the dedicated workshops. For example, theme-based technical cooperation workshops were organized for Central Asian and Caucasus countries to share good practices in implementing their EPR recommendations, focused on greening the energy and transport sectors. These workshops enabled in-depth exchange of good practices and experience among participating countries.

The EPR tool is constantly evolving to respond to emerging issues and new regional and global challenges. Since 2011, most EPRs covered topics such as the green economy and climate change, and the tool was aligned to SDGs in 2017. The methodology is modified regularly, based on lessons learned, SDG nationalization processes

and the national context in the Member States, and feedback from the major national and international stakeholders.

For example, the three EPRs conducted in 2017 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mongolia) provide an assessment and recommendations with regard to a number of SDG targets. They also address systemic issues, including the existence of policy and institutional frameworks for SDG implementation, adoption of national targets and indicators, data gaps for SDGs, national ownership and means of implementation. These recommendations provide guidance to the governments and other stakeholders in designing concrete policies and measures to achieve the SDGs.

EPR recommendations are designed with a time-frame of five to seven years. Policymaking frameworks have already shown improvement. For example, the EPR of Mongolia now feeds into the Pathways for Implementation of the Internationally Agreed Commitments of Mongolia, which will guide action in the country as it implements the 2030 Agenda.

EPR has contributed to the following:

- Improved policy and legal frameworks and integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies;
- Strengthened environmental management institutions;
- Increased financial resources for environmental protection and greening the economy;
- Improved environmental monitoring and information systems;
- Strengthened public participation; and
- Increased international cooperation.

Clearly, EPR contributes to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national implementation of the SDGs.

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**Project name:** Environmental Performance Reviews (EPR) Programme<sup>1</sup>

**Countries/Regions:** Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

South-Eastern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Other countries: Mongolia, Morocco

**Nominated by:** UNECE

**Sustainable Development Goal target(s):** 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.9, 3.a, 5.a, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.b, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.a, 7.b, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.8, 9.1, 9.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.b, 11.2, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.b, 12.1, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.c, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.6, 15.7, 15.8, 15.9, 15.a, 15.b, 15.c, 17.14

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**URL of the practice:** <https://www.unece.org/env/epr.html>