

Contribution to Beyond GDP „Virtual Indicator Expo“

<http://www.beyond-gdp.eu>

Name of the indicator/method: **Core set of indicators**

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The Core Set of Indicators

In 2004, the European Environment Agency (EEA) launched a [core set of indicators](#). This exercise was carried out with three main objectives in mind, namely to:

- Provide a manageable and stable basis for indicator-based assessments of progress against environmental policy priorities;
- Prioritise improvements in the quality and coverage of data flows - improvements that will enhance comparability and certainty of information and assessments;
- Streamline contributions to other indicator initiatives in Europe and beyond.

When establishing and developing the core set, the Agency was guided by the need to identify a small number of policy-relevant indicators that are stable, but not static, and that give answers to selected priority policy questions. These indicators should, however, be considered alongside other information if they are to be fully effective in environmental reporting.

The core set comprises 37 indicators covering six environmental themes (air pollution and ozone depletion, climate change, waste, water, biodiversity and terrestrial environment) and four sectors (agriculture, energy, transport and fisheries).

- **Criteria**

The indicators in the core set were selected from a much larger set, on the basis of criteria widely used elsewhere in Europe and by the OECD. Particular attention was given to the relevance for policy priorities, objectives and targets, the availability of high-quality data over both time and space, and the application of well-founded methods for indicator calculation.

- **Using the core set**

The core set, and particularly its assessments and key messages, is targeted mainly at policy makers at the EU and national level who can use the outcomes to inform on progress with their policies. EU and national institutions can also use the core set to support streamlining of data flows at the EU level. Environmental experts can use it as a tool for their own work by using the underlying data and

methodologies to do their own analysis. They are invited to look at the set critically, give feedback and so contribute to future EEA core set developments.

General users will be able to access the core set on the web in an easily understandable way, and use available tools and data to do their own analyses and presentations.

- Decoupling from main reports

The core set is updated when data becomes available. This is linked to the cycles of the countries' data reporting rather than to the publishing timetable of the Agency's big reports (for more, see the reporting obligations database [ROD](#)). This means that the EEA has access to an information base that is available for several purposes (e.g. speeches, other reports, briefings) and which can be used at short notice to underpin timely input into policy debates. It also means that the EEA member countries have access to comparative information when needed for their own state of the environment reporting cycles and policy needs.

The other benefit of maintaining an independent information base is that if the official review and acceptance of the data is separated from the assessment - the assessments have more impact as the discussion will tend to focus on what might be causing the trends and results, rather than on whether the data are correct or not.

This was the main reason for the success and impact of the EEA scorecard comparing environmental country performance and progress that was published as part of the report [The European Environment - State and Outlook 2005](#).

- Information Management

The EEA takes its responsibility as an information provider seriously, emphasising quality assurance of the data used. We also ensure that users know about the uncertainties related to the data and indicators, both in terms of the rationale and concept behind the indicator and when it comes to the quality of the input data. This high degree of transparency enables users to judge the quality of the information. It also adds to the credibility of the assessments made on basis of the data, even when these are made by bodies other than the EEA.

The Agency strives to improve the quality and availability of environmental information and has an ongoing programme of developing tools and support to facilitate use of environmental information, by civil servants, researchers, policy makers and the public at large.

- Two examples from the core set indicators

1. Progress in management of contaminated sites (CSI 015)

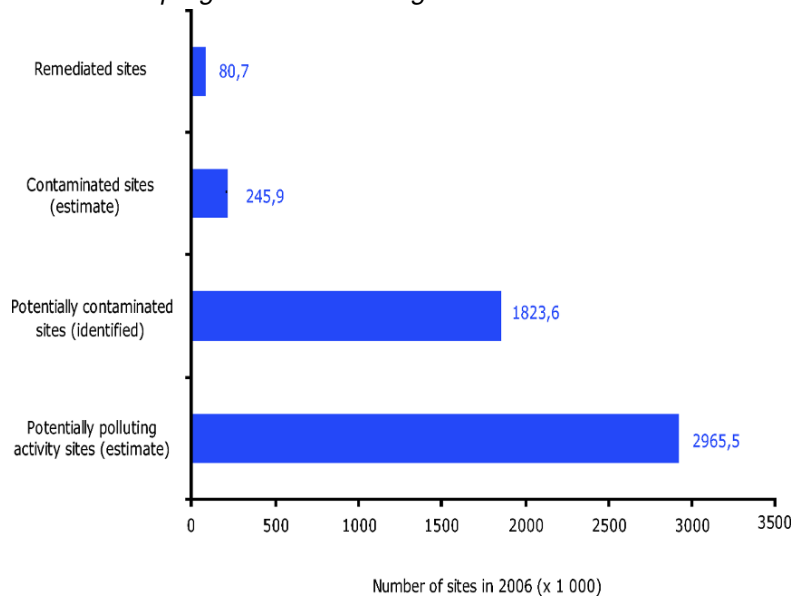
Key policy question: How is the problem of contaminated sites being addressed (clean-up of historical contamination and prevention of new contamination)?

According to recent estimates, there are presently approximately 250 000 sites with contaminated soil requiring cleanup in the EEA member countries - and this number is expected to increase. Potentially polluting activities are estimated to have occurred at nearly 3 million sites (including the 250 000 sites already mentioned) and investigation is needed to establish whether remediation is required. If current investigation trends continue, the number of sites needing remediation will increase by 50% by 2025.

By contrast, more than 80 000 sites have been cleaned up in the last 30 years in the countries where data on remediation is available. The range of polluting activities (and their relative importance as localised sources of soil contamination) varies considerably across Europe. However, industrial and commercial activities as well as the treatment and disposal of waste are reported to be the most important sources. National reports indicate that heavy metals and mineral oil are the most frequent

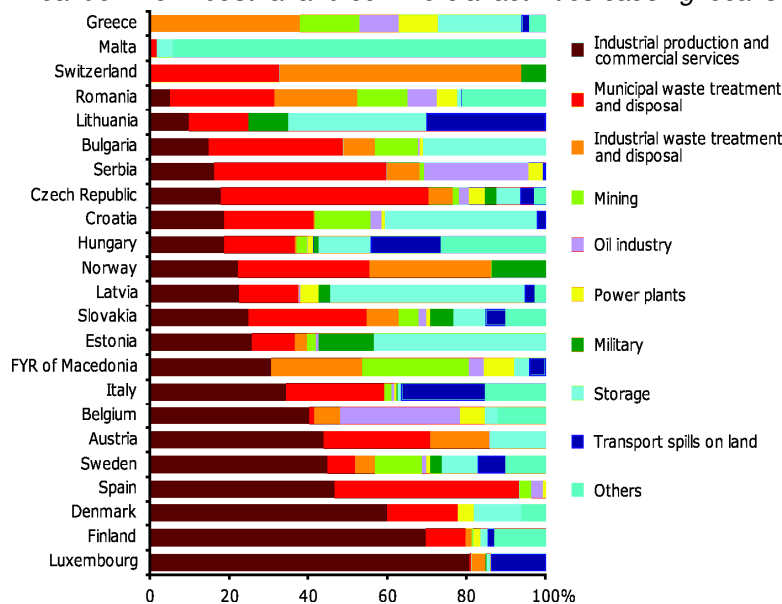
soil contaminants at investigated sites, while mineral oil and chlorinated hydrocarbons are the most frequent contaminants found in groundwater. A considerable share of remediation expenditure, about 35% on average, comes from public budgets. Although considerable efforts have been made already, it will take decades to clean up a legacy of contamination.

Overview of progress in the management of contaminated sites in Europe (Ver. 1.00)



Source: EIONET priority data flows on contaminated sites, Turkey: NATO/CCMS-Turkey, 2006; United Kingdom: Environment Agency of England & Wales, 2005.

Breakdown of industrial and commercial activities causing local soil contamination



Source: EIONET priority data flows on contaminated sites

2. Renewable energy consumption (CSI 030)

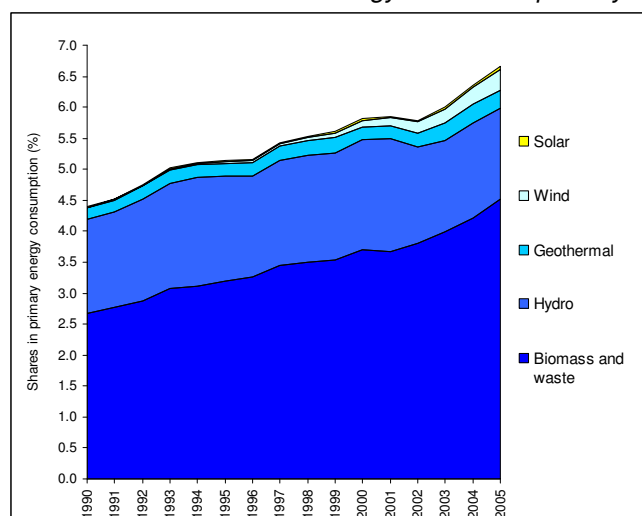
Key policy question: Are we switching to renewable energy sources to meet our energy consumption?

The share of renewable energy sources in primary energy consumption is increasing slowly in the EU-

27 - from 4.4% in 1990 to 6.7 % in 2007. This has helped to reduce otherwise higher greenhouse gas emissions. However, rising overall energy consumption in absolute terms is offsetting some of the environmental benefits from more use of renewables.

The strongest increase comes from wind and solar energy; although their combined share in renewable energy consumption still stands at less than 6%. In absolute terms, about 80% of the increase is accounted for by biomass, which takes a share of more than two thirds of all renewables. Hydropower has been falling in the past years as a result of lower rainfall and its share stands at about 22% of renewable energy consumption. Significant progress will be needed to meet the indicative target of a 12 % renewables share for the EU by 2010. The European Council of 8-9 March 2007 endorsed a binding target of a 20 % share of renewable energies in overall EU energy consumption by 2020.

Contribution of renewable energy sources to primary energy consumption in the EU-27, 1990-2005



Source: EEA, Eurostat.

Share of renewable energy in primary energy consumption (%) 1990-2005

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EEA	5.5	6.2	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.9	7.2	7.6
EU-27	4.4	5.1	5.8	5.9	5.8	6.0	6.4	6.7
EU-15	4.9	5.3	5.9	6.0	5.8	6.0	6.4	6.7
Belgium	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.9	2.1	3.5
Bulgaria	0.6	1.6	4.2	3.6	4.4	4.9	5.2	5.6
Czech Republic	0.2	1.5	1.5	1.7	2.1	3.4	4.0	4.1
Denmark	6.7	7.6	10.8	11.4	12.4	13.5	15.1	16.2
Germany	1.6	1.9	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.6	4.0	4.8
Estonia	4.5	8.8	10.8	10.4	10.3	9.5	10.6	11.2
Ireland	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.6
Greece	5.0	5.3	5.0	4.5	4.7	5.1	5.1	5.2
Spain	7.0	5.5	5.7	6.6	5.5	7.0	6.5	6.1
France	7.0	7.5	7.0	7.1	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.0
Italy	4.2	4.8	5.2	5.5	5.3	5.9	6.8	6.5
Cyprus	0.4	2.1	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.0
Latvia	13.1	27.5	34.3	34.1	34.5	33.1	36.0	36.3
Lithuania	2.0	5.7	9.2	8.4	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.8
Luxembourg	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.6
Hungary	1.8	2.4	2.1	1.9	3.4	3.4	3.7	4.2
Malta	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Netherlands	1.4	1.6	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.9	3.5
Austria	20.2	22.0	23.2	22.2	22.2	19.3	20.8	20.5
Poland	1.6	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.8
Portugal	18.8	16.3	15.4	15.7	14.0	17.1	14.9	13.4
Romania	4.2	5.9	10.9	9.3	9.8	10.0	11.7	12.8
Slovenia	4.6	9.4	12.3	11.5	10.9	10.3	11.6	10.6
Slovakia	1.6	2.9	2.8	3.9	3.7	3.3	3.9	4.3
Finland	19.0	21.2	23.9	22.4	21.9	20.9	23.0	23.2
Sweden	24.9	26.0	31.4	28.3	26.3	25.3	25.8	29.8
United Kingdom	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.7
Turkey	18.5	17.4	13.1	13.2	13.4	12.7	13.2	11.9
Iceland	64.9	67.6	71.4	73.2	72.8	72.8	72.3	73.0
Norway	53.2	48.9	51.0	44.0	51.7	38.3	37.7	40.4

Source: EEA, Eurostat..

Other information available through the EEA to support assessments

The EEA core set is highly structured around the [DPSIR](#) analytical framework (Driving forces, Pressures, State, Trends and Responses) and is supported by a large information base containing expert knowledge, as well as qualitative and quantitative information. This currently includes about 500 other [indicators](#), data viewers for [greenhouse gases](#), [ozone](#), [water](#) and [air emissions](#). The Agency focuses on providing geo-referenced information that allows people to seek information from their local area, for example in the ozone and water viewers mentioned above and the recently launched [environmental technology atlas](#).

The EEA has also developed tools to support environmental education and training, and is committed to developing, testing and communicating new and best practice approaches to creating environmental assessments.