Country Briefing
on State of the Environment Information in Georgia

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Overall aim and specific objectives of the Country Briefing

The overall aim of the Country Briefing is to provide an overview of and make accessible state of environment information available at the country level.

More specifically, Country Briefing has three objectives:

- To provide interested parties with comparable, accurate and timely information on the environmental status in the six Eastern Partnership Countries of the ENI SEIS II East project that provides useful input into national environmental policy debates in international context.
- To demonstrate country performance and enable the user/reader to compare countries with other Eastern Partnership Countries
- To share good experience in the field of environmental assessment, information and environmental protection.

Methodological approach to the Country Briefing preparation

The methodological approach is based on the approach used in the preparation of The European environment state and outlook report 2015 (SOER 2015) – Part Countries and regions and is slightly modified in relation to the needs of the ENI SEIS II East project.

The Country Briefings are presented in interactive online versions at the website of the ENI SEIS II East project. Each Country Briefing contains separate sections to address the four main topics:

- **Main themes and sectors addressed in the national State of Environment report**

  The purpose of this part is to provide an introduction to the national SOER and understanding of its structure as well as the main topics that are addressed in the report. The text adresses the legal requirement and frequency of the national SOER, methodological basis and use of indicators, structure of the report, overview of main themes addressed in the report and provides links to additional underlying information (e.g. national indicator system, additional reports if relevant, etc.). Suggested length: up to 250 words.

- **Key findings of the State of Environment report/ Key finding of the state of the environment**

  The purpose of this part is to provide brief overview of the state of the environment in the country. It provides a summary of the key messages as well as key findings within the topics addressed in the latest national SOE report. Suggested length: up to 800 words.

  Notice: *By mutual agreement with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova, the latest available official data on the environment was used for summary evaluations.*

- **Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns**

  The purpose of this part is to reflect on the state of the environment in the wider national context, focusing on the main challenges, environmental concerns and existing policies addressing these challenges/concerns in the country. In this part there are also highlighted policy responses to improve the state of the environment. Suggested length: up to 500 words.

- **Country specific issues**

  The purpose of this part is to provide an opportunity to highlight country specific issues addressed in the SOE report or in relevant adopted policies, including emerging issues and how countries are dealing with them and, innovative policies supporting long term transition towards a more sustainable society in the country. The aim is to help to identify interesting developments and innovative approaches that could be an interest for other Eastern Partnership Countries. This includes the environmental political agenda; green economy, forward looking information and scenarios, regional issues etc. The suggestions mentioned below are based on the discussions during the country visit. Suggested length: up to 500 words.

Main themes and sectors addressed in the national State of Environment report (SOER)

The SOER of Georgia is published every four years by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (Ministry) in accordance with the Article 14 of the Law on Environmental Protection of Georgia. The SOER 2007-2009 was prepared and published with the support of the EU, which is available in both Georgian and English[1]. The last SOER 2010-2013[2] was prepared and published with the financial support of GIZ and USAID. It is available only in Georgian. The new SOER 2014-2017 will be finalized in 2019 and it will be available in both Georgian and English languages.

The document describes the main directions of environmental policy of the country, presents information on the qualitative and quantitative state of the environment, also on the outcomes of the environmental activities carried out within the frames of international relations, and gives the analysis of environmental impact of different economic sectors.

This report of 310-page document contains 21 chapters and 8 main topics as follows: Environmental Governance, Environmental Impact of Economic Sectors, Ambient air quality, Climate change, Water protection, Land and Mineral Resources, Natural disasters, Waste, Chemicals and Radiation.

Methodology for preparation of Georgian SOER is described in The Government decree "Rules for the development of the National Report on the State of Environment" (2014). The Decree determines the structure, drafting procedures and timelines of the report.

Key findings of the State of Environment

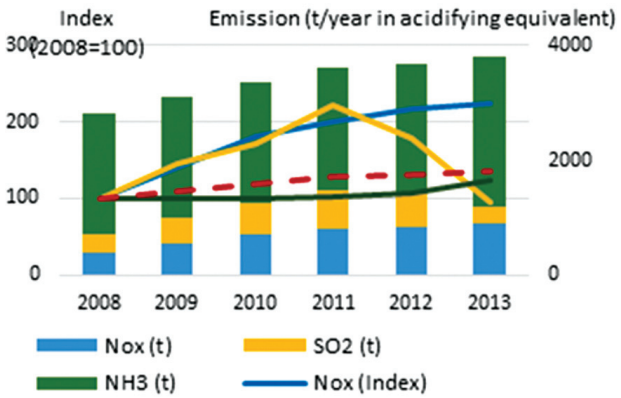
Georgia´s economy is on track to recover from downturn caused by 2008 August War and Global Economic Crisis. In 2010-2013 average annual GDP per capita growth rate was 5.8%.Georgia's economy is supported by a relatively free and transparent atmosphere in the country.

Ambient air

The major problem consists in the impact of polluted air on human health, ecosystems and tangible values and in the resulting economic and social consequences. The impact on human health is much higher in urban areas, where an economic activity of different types and intensive transport traffic are concentrated.

The general trend of emissions of air pollution substances from economic sectors over the period of 2010-2013 has been negative – all emissions have been on the rise except for SO_2 and concentration of dust, NO_2 and SO_2 exceeded national limit values in big cities of Georgia.In 2011-2013 57% reduction of SO_2 emissions has been achieved as a result of toughening the automotive fuel standard. Emissions of primary PM are insignificantly increasing since 2000. However, as compared to the year 2008, their emissions dropped by 15% in 2013. In 2013, transport sector was the source of 62% of the NO2 emissions. Also noteworthy is an increase in emissions of Ozone precursors from energy and transport sectors. There was a 40% increase in emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in 2010-2013due to rise of emissions in energy sector.

[1] National Report on State of Environment of Georgia 2007-2009
[2] National Report on State of Environment in Georgia 2010-2013

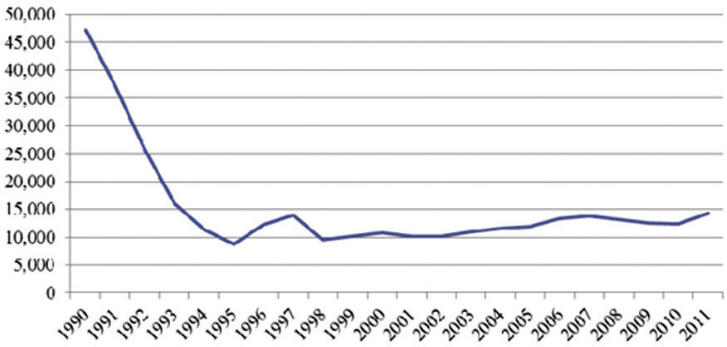


Total emissions of acidifying substances in Georgia 2008-2013 (Index; t/year in acidifying equivalent)[3]

Greenhouse gas emissions

The share of Georgia's Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in global emissions is only 0.02%. GHG emissions measured in carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalent decreased by approximately 70% between 1990 and 2011. In 2011, the sudden and very rapid growth of emissions (14.6% compared to the previous year) was observed that was a result of a combination of several factors: high economic growth, demand for electricity and relatively shallow hydrologic year, as well as increased use of coal in the processing industry.

In 2011, the highest share, 55% of total GHG emissions were generated by the energy sector, followed by industry - 20%, agriculture - 17% and waste -8%.



GHG emissions trend in Georgia 1990-2011 (CO_2 equivalent, gigagramm/year)

Water

Concentration of ammonium ions exceeds admissible norm in majority of Georgian rivers. In Mashavera, Kazretula and Kvirila rivers there are high values of some heavy metals, caused by the wastewaters of manganese and copper processing plants. Concentrations of nitrate, nitrite and phosphate ions are significantly low in Gerogian rivers.Tskhenistsqali and Jejora rivers in the west of Georgia was polluted by arsenic containing waste.

In 2010-2013, the total water use (excluding water for hydropower) increased by 15% that was mainly caused by increased demand of water for irrigation, industry and thermal power plants. The drinking water supply sector remains the largest water consumer in Georgia amounting 45% of total water use. In 2013, the coverage of the population served by a centralized water supply system was 70%, including 95% of urban and 35% of rural population. The violation of qualitative parameters was revealed in 30% of drinking water samples that was taken mainly from rural water supply networks.

Untreated municipal wastewater remain the main pollution source for surface waters including the Black Sea waters due to poorly operated collection and treatment infrastructures. The municipal wastewater collection system isprovided to 38% of the population of Georgia, while only 11% of population is connected to wastewater treatment facilities.

[3] Emissions of the acidifying substances have been calculated based on the international methodology (de Leeuw F. A.A.M. A set of emission indicators for long-range transboundary air pollution. Environmental Science and Policy, V. 5, (2), 2002. pp. 135-145)

Waste

Improper municipal landfills as well as old accumulated hazardous waste represented the source of environmental contamination for years. Since 2012, step by-step activities have been carried out for rehabilitation/closing of landfills, planning/construction of new landfills, collecting, packing, exporting and disposal of hazardous waste.

There has been a steady increase in the volume of municipal waste generation. 350,000 tons of waste was generated in Tbilisi in 2013 that is 50,000 tons more than in 2010. Per capita amount of waste generation is still well below European average.

Land

Land and soil erosion processes have been strengthened especially in recent years in Georgia due to global warming. The severity of the degradation process is compounded by the unsustainable use of soil by population. 60% of Georgia's agricultural land has average or low fertility. Monitoring of land pollution was restored in 2013 and passive samplings are carried out in the country.

Biodiversity

2 national parks, 6 managed reserves and 26 natural monuments were added to the Protected Areas network of Georgia in 2010-2013. As a result, Protected Areas covered 520,811 ha which is approximately 7.5% of the territory of the country.

Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns

Environmental pollution and climate change have been recognized as major threats to Georgia's long-term socioeconomic development. Social-Economic Development **Strategy of Georgia "GEORGIA 2020"**[4] aims to promote rational use of natural resources, ensure environmental safety and sustainability and prevent natural disasters along with efforts to efficient and inclusive economic growth.

In 2014 Georgia signed the **Association Agreement (AA)**[5] with EU that covers almost all environmental directions and is a main source of reforms for the country.

Georgia has made great progress in developing strategic environmental policies:

The Third National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia 2017-2021 (NEAP-3) is a main strategic document in the field of environment and natural resources protection that identifies priorities, strategic objectives and long-term goals of Georgia as well as sets targets and activities required to improve the state of the environment.

Government of Georgia is fully committed to the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. At this stage, the Ministry has taken responsibility to implement 9 targets and 11 indicators of 5 SDGs in the field of environment.

Georgia has committed under the **Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E)** to elaborate Green Growth Strategy, develop Education for Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan, Promote Greening SMEs and Resource Efficient Production and Consumption and develop Extended Producer Responsibility Policy in Georgia.

Ambient air

State Program on "Enabling activities to abate ambient air pollution in Tbilisi" 2017-2020 was approved in 2017. While the Program aims at improving air quality in Tbilisi, a number of measures go beyond the capital and are nationwide.

Georgia also took 7 commitments under **Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA)**.

[4] Strategy of Georgia "GEORGIA 2020"
[5] Association Agenda

Greenhouse gas emissions

Georgia, with its **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)**[6], made a commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 15% unconditionally and up to 25% in a conditional manner by 2030. Georgia became a party to the Paris Agreement in 2017 and now is in the process to revise INDC.

Waste

National Waste Management Strategy and **National Waste Management Action Plan 2016-2020**[7] along with the Law on Waste Management Code (2015) is a basis for waste management reform in the country.

Land

Second National Action Programme to Combat Desertification 2015 – 2022[8] is the main national strategic document in the field of desertification/land degradation.

Biodiversity

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2014-2020[9] sets 21 national targets according the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and includes respective activities aiming at preservation of the values of biodiversity in Georgia.

In 2013, the Parliament of Georgia approved the main policy document in the forestry sector - the **National Forest Concept for Georgia**[10], which defines the key principles and sets the priority directions to establish European model of sustainable forest management in Georgia.

Country specific issues

The permitting system should be emphasized among the key reforms in the field of environmental governance in Georgia.

The new law - Environmental Assessment Code was adopted on June 1, 2017. The Code significantly improved environmental governance and ensured higher degree of public participation not only in planning but also in decision-making processes, and thus contributed to the better implementation of the national and international obligations. The Code established Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system increasing list of activities subject to EIA, simplifying the procedures and saving the time for developer. Developer is no longer required to conduct public discussion. It is the state instead.

The Code also established Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) system that envisages integration of environmental and human health related aspects in strategic planning and improvement of transboundary cooperation.

Substantial part of the Code has been enacted since January 1, 2018.

As for the future plans related to the permitting reform, Georgia is going to gradually establish integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) system based on one stop shop principle. The IPPC approach implies the application of modern environmental management principles like best available techniques (BAT) and emission limit values (ELV).

While executing the new Environmental Assessment Code in the framework of the above-mentioned environmental legislation reform, Georgia is developing the draft Law on Environmental Liability and draft methodology for environmental damage calculation that will establish a new system of environmental liability and legal conditions for the prevention and remediation of significant environmental damage in accordance with the Polluter Pays Principle.

[6] Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Georgia
[7] The National Waste Management Strategy 2016-2030 and an Action Plan 2016-2020
[8] Second National Action Programme to Combat Desertification 2015 – 2022
[9] National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia 2014 – 2020
[10] National Forest Concept of Georgia