What is The European Neighbourhood Policy?

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and our neighbours and instead strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all concerned.

The EU offers its neighbours a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The central element of the European Neighbourhood Policy is the bilateral ENP Action Plans agreed upon between the EU and each partner, which set out an agenda of priorities for political and economic reforms. Environment, including climate change – as well as energy, transport and sustainable development are amongst the topics covered by the ENP Action Plans.

The European Neighbourhood Policy applies to the EU’s immediate neighbours by land or sea – Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Although Russia is also a neighbour of the EU, our relations are instead developed through a Strategic Partnership.

EU Environment Policy

European Union environment policy is based on the belief that high environmental standards stimulate innovation and business opportunities. The cornerstone of EU environment policy is an action programme entitled Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice, which focuses on:

▶ climate change and global warming;
▶ the natural habitat and wildlife;
▶ environment and health issues;
▶ natural resources and managing waste.

The Action Programme also forms the basis for the development of thematic strategies that straddle the priority areas. These strategies concern air pollution, waste prevention, recycling, the marine environment, soil, pesticides, resource use and the urban environment. Other key objectives of the Action Programme are:

▶ enforcing existing environmental laws;
▶ taking the environmental impact into account in all EU policies;
▶ closely involving business and consumers in policy formulation;
▶ giving people the information they need to make environmentally friendly choices;
▶ raising awareness of the importance of using land wisely.

Many environmental problems go beyond the borders of the EU. That is why the EU is a signatory to international programmes and conventions governing a range of problems, such as acid rain, biodiversity, desertification, hazardous wastes, oil spills, persistent organic pollutants, the protection of the great rivers and seas as well as tropical forests. The EU is at the forefront of international efforts to combat climate change.
“Economy grinds to a halt as traffic congestion worsens…”

“Infant mortality rates rise due to lack of clean water…”

“Dirty beaches keep tourists away…”

We’ve been here already...

Headlines like these keep appearing in newspapers and other media! Environmental problems have serious consequences for the economy, people’s health and our quality of life:

- Poor management of water resources can severely reduce agricultural output, leaving poor farming communities struggling to cope. It can also create or exacerbate cross-border tensions.
- Unregulated development of coastal zones and other beauty spots can ruin tourist attractions – which is bad news for the economy.
- Industrial pollution of rivers and other water bodies can harm wildlife, damage fisheries and spoil drinking water – affecting tourism, the fishing industry and human health.
- Under-investment in public transport results in severe congestion from private cars, and poor air quality – making our cities unpleasant, unhealthy places to live.
- Uncontrolled development of coastal zones and other beauty spots can ruin tourist attractions – which is bad news for the economy.
- Environmental problems have serious consequences for the economy, people’s health and our quality of life:

...why reinvent the wheel?

Through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU is building partnerships with its neighbours.EU action to help its partners tackle environmental issues can take many different forms:

- Sharing EU experience of improving decision-making processes, such as through better collection and use of environmental data to help target priorities, and by more closely involving communities and other stakeholders who might be affected.
- Technical advice and assistance to help build expertise and know-how on environmental issues in partner countries.
- Collaboration on issues of common interest, for example through research projects or political initiatives such as Horizon 2020 in the Mediterranean region, or the Danube and Black Sea Task Force.
- Providing financial assistance where appropriate:

“Dirty beaches keep tourists away…”

“Clean green train gets commuters to work on time…”

“Tourists flock to see rare birds come home to roost…”

“Asthma rates drop as air quality improves in cities…”

Experience from across the ENP countries suggests that collaboration with the EU is having a positive effect. In addition to bilateral projects, the EU has been pivotal in establishing and promoting multilateral initiatives to enhance the environment while protecting economic and social concerns in Neighbourhood countries. For example the recently launched Black Sea Synergy regional cooperation initiative is addressing areas such as human rights and democracy, security, energy, transport, trade, science and technology, employment, regional development and environment.

“In few other spheres do the actions of one country so directly impact on other countries... the environment is a shared resource. Through the ENP, the EU seeks to work with its neighbours to protect it.”

Stavros Dimas
Commissioner for Environment

Sustainable development in the Caucasus

The EU has been helping communities to develop Local Agenda 21 action plans – a community plan for sustainable development – in the mountain regions of the Caucasus (working in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia). Despite various challenges such as changing legislative frameworks, and changing governmental structures and priorities, the project team helped communities to identify their priorities for development.

For example, in Chiora, Georgia, villagers prioritised the rehabilitation of the drinking water pipe system: with the EU’s help, villagers used traditional carpentry skills to promote tourism and raise awareness of local cultural heritage and history. The success of this project has been due in part to the strong support received from national and local government in each country.

Environmental reform in Jordan

Jordan has embarked on an overall environmental reform process, including the promotion and enforcement of a range of institutional frameworks. The EU has provided advice and assistance for the reform of the Environment Ministry. It also supported the Ministry in developing a multi-purpose environmental information and knowledge management system, as well as environmental impact assessments, and investing in strengthened enforcement of environmental rules.

We've been here already...

The European Union’s first environment policy was launched in 1972, giving it 35 years’ experience of addressing environmental issues on a collective basis. In fact, some of the European Union member countries have more than a century’s experience of regulating industrial pollution and addressing nature protection!

The EU’s experience in addressing common environmental, social and economic challenges can be valuable for other countries that are facing some of the same issues. While the political, economic, social and human context may differ in the European Neighbourhood Policy partner countries, many of the underlying causes of environmental degradation are the same.

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