

3. Institutional and administrative instruments of environmental policy for sustainable development

During the last years an institutional system has been established and already operates in Latvia and that facilitates to introduction of environmental *acquis*. In order to improve the flow of regulatory documents of environmental protection, the environmental protection sub-commission was established in Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) in June 2001.

During the time period since the submission of negotiation position substantial progress has been achieved in support of institutions - in July 2001 the Radiation Safety Centre was established, the State Environmental Impact Assessment Bureau operates as the central authority in the field of integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) since the beginning of 2001, additional staff positions are established in the Environment State Inspectorate. In order to perform further support and rationalisation of authorities the objective of which is to introduce the EU conditions in environment protection and environmental monitoring, the government supported proposals regarding the allocation of additional funds (265 thousand Euros) in the General budget of 2002 for establishment of a new authority - the Nature Protection Board (acts since May 2002) and for the development of environmental monitoring system (170,000 Euros). Additional funds were allocated to the State Environment Inspection (85,000 Euros) and to the State Environmental Impact Assessment Bureau (90,000 Euros) for introduction of requirements of the EU Seveso directive.

In 2001 and 2002 the process of harmonisation and acceptance of legislative acts in the Cabinet of Ministers was accelerated and that facilitated the incorporation of EU requirements regarding environmental impact assessment, prevention and control of integrated pollution, large chemical accident risk (Seveso), waste incineration, etc. Work plans were reviewed and additional funds were attracted in individual fields (for example, water protection and activities with biocides) in order to complete the harmonisation of all necessary legislative acts at the end of 2002 - in the first half of 2003.

However, in order to introduce environmental *acquis* completely, attention must be turned to the administrative capacity of Latvia, co-operation and co-ordination between environmental institutions and institutions of other sectors (one of the main leading motives for provision of sustainable development shall be borne in mind - economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection must go hand by hand!).

It is important to strengthen all the environmental institutions, but in particular - the Latvian Environment Agency (LEA) and Regional Environmental Boards (REB). At present the Latvian Environment Agency provides decision-makers, experts and public with objective, reliable and timely information on environment, its resources and pollution load on it. In 2001 LEA developed a long-term national environmental monitoring programme, published

the first report on national environmental indicators (see LEA home page), and the role of the institution as the national co-ordinator in international environment information circulation changed significantly acquiring the status of a member country of the European Environment Agency (EEA) (since 1 January 2002). To that time the Latvian Environment Agency fulfilled the functions of the national co-ordinator and national reference centre in the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) of the European Environment Agency (EEA), the information system Infoterra of the United Nations Environment Programme and Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1974, 1992).

Still there is a lack of human resources to interpret requirements of EC environmental legislative acts in order to explain to the public the urgency, necessity of environment policy and correlation with other economic sectors. In Regional Environment Boards, in particular - in the field of industrial pollution, it is necessary to separate such competencies as issuance of permits, conformity assessment, inspections and implementation. Appeal mechanisms must be strengthened and made more effective. Special attention shall be paid to establishment of effective structures on local level, in particular it relates to institutions currently responsible for municipal waste and local protected nature territories.

As regards the planning and development of programmes, it is important to strengthen the capacity at regional and local level, as well as to accelerate preparatory work for introduction of EC environmental policy. The progress has been achieved in the fields of environment protection, air and water, however, it is necessary to modernise and renew the monitoring infrastructure and equipment. Procedures for co-ordination and provision of reports shall also be improved when issuing permits and performing inspection, the monitoring data must be used more efficiently. Special attention must be paid to improvement of waste monitoring system. Finally, major human resources shall be diverted for co-operation and support of private enterprises.

Although the number of inspection agencies has increased they still pay the most attention to large enterprises, thereby small and medium-sized enterprises are not adequately controlled. In addition, inspection agencies shall introduce an integrated approach and improve the co-ordination between monitoring and inspection.

In last years special consideration is provided to internal control of environment protection institutions. In 2001 the Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Latvia - since 1 February 2003) was enlarged and it performed 12 audits both in the Ministry and in the institutions subordinate to it. The Division has also performed audits in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance regarding the programmes and projects financed by

the European Union. As the result it evaluated how many institutions themselves are ready for internal control (the auditors of the Ministry provided 71 recommendations on the system improvement).

The request to provide information to the public on environment matters and the necessity to receive correct information has increased rapidly and logically. Thus in 2000, in co-operation with the Country Office Latvia of the Regional Environmental Centre, the project "Analysis of Prerequisites for Implementation of Aarhus Convention"¹, in which Latvian legislative acts and practical possibilities were analysed in order to conform with requirements set out in the convention. In 2000, within the scope of the project "Promotion of Environmental Education Projects" a brochure "Popular version of Aarhus Convention" was published.

On 31 January 2002 by the order No. 50 the Cabinet approved the draft law On Aarhus Convention of 25 June 1998 On Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. On 18 April 2002 the law was adopted by the Saeima.

In order to facilitate the implementation of requirements prescribed by the Convention, five working groups have been set up which co-ordinate the implementation and conformity of the convention, the register of emission and transfer of polluting substances, production and flow of genetically modified organisms, electronic information means and supervise the access to justice.

State institutions of environmental protection utilise several instruments of public relationships (PR) and types of communication in the work of public relationships, in order the information on current events in the fields of environment, nature, environment investments, construction and other fields of responsibility reach the public efficiently and objectively. They are as follows: work with mass media (press conferences, press briefings), workshops, participation in exhibitions, meetings with various target-groups, information campaigns, distribution of informative materials, electronic means of communication. The forwarding of a weekly publication to the mass media containing the information on current events and provided activities of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is an integral part of everyday work in public relations of the Ministry. A press briefing provides more comprehensive and more complete information on current activities in work of the Ministry and opinions of the Ministry officials.

Environmental protection specialists have participated in several television discussions in the programme "Temats" ("Theme") on Latvian television on such important themes as small hydroelectric power stations, establishment of the

NATURA 2000 network of particularly protected territories in Latvia, development of incoming tourism. Such means of turning attention of the public involve not only interested parties, but also general public in environmental problems thereby establishing a friendly attitude of the public towards environment and nature diversity, and raising the level of education. Upon request of the Ministry, the Wildlife and Environmental Film Productions made a multimedia "Environment and Development" which received the main prize in the International Festival AVANCA (Portugal) in the category of multimedia in 2001. It may be considered the first visual-informative mini encyclopaedia on environment protection system in Latvia, the most important problems and solutions.

In 2001, environmental specialists also participated in the development of the Governmental Communication Strategy which is an important step in the development and improvement of public information and participation, and they participated in a working group on public information regarding the European Union matters - the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development provided its contribution, for example, by organisation of a seminar on the EC environmental programme LIFE, as well as by organisation of several seminars on EU structural fund ISPA both in Riga and regions and by development of informative booklets regarding these matters. Booklets, reports, and other informative materials prepared by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development are one of the most significant types to convince specialists of other economic sectors to integrate environmental protection matters in the development plans of their sectors.

The Internet home pages of the Ministry and subordinate institutions were regularly improved where the relevant information on regulatory documents and programme documents, and projects in environmental protection, as well as translations of EU directives and the EU accession procedures in environmental field are available. It is a possibility to non-governmental organisations (NGO) and to all interested persons not only to become acquainted with operation of environmental agencies, but also to participate with their comments and recommendations in the development of legislative acts and solution of various urgent problems.

A very important project for raising of public interest in development of environment and all animate nature was the Latvian - Danish co-operation project "Development of a Latvian Environmental Interpretation Service" (VITILA) that was conducted for two years - from January 2001 to December 2002 in Latvia. The main task of the project was to establish a professional environmental interpreters² network in Latvia by using Danish experience. The Ministry

¹ Aarhus Convention (1998) on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters

² Environmental interpreter - a specialist having particular knowledge in pedagogy, biology, geography, forestry, environmental protection, culture and history, etc. who is able to provide a description of particular thing, surrounding, etc. emotionally and in convincing and oratory manner, and to bring his conviction and interest in hearts of public. In so doing, a better understanding and harmony in relations between a human and nature, between the living model of a cynic consumer and an individual with respect for environment is achieved. The main mission of an environmental interpreter - to enrich and change human conscience, understanding, value system and conduct.

of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Danish Ministry of Environment and Energy and Danish environmental consultation company Holsteinborg Consult supported the VITILA project. Danish Environment Protection Agency and Latvian Environmental Protection Fund. provided the core funding of the project.

In the project Latvian and Danish experts held various theoretical and practical training seminars in environmental interpretation³ in which 22 specialists of Latvian environmental protection and environmental education participated. Within the scope of the project three sub-projects were implemented in the Gauja National Park, North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve and Nature Studies and Environmental Education Centre of Daugavpils University promoting the development of environment interpretation in different environmental fields (terrestrial and water ecosystems, urban environment). In spring and summer of 2002 all interested persons could visit four exhibitions in the sub-projects and in Latvian Museum of Natural History. As the result, professional environmental interpreters were prepared who accept excursion application from any interested groups (in particular - children). Five Environmental Interpreters Newsletters, several other informative materials and a handbook for environmental interpreters were published and a training film was recorded. At present the Latvian Environmental Interpreters Co-ordination Centre is situated in the Museum of Natural History where all interested persons may receive the necessary information.

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- /3/ Position paper of the Republic of Latvia in Section 22 "Environmental Protection".
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³ Environmental interpretation - educational and correctional activity which is performed by an environmental interpreter and the purpose of which is to achieve better understanding of processes taking place in environment (nature) and public, and mutual interaction thereof promoting the increase of public environment awareness level and environment-friendly behaviour. Although this profession is noted only now in Latvia, practically enthusiasts and professionals have already performed the environmental (nature and cultural environment) interpretation successfully for several years. Environmental interpretation on its merits is one of the most attractive and most perspective forms of environmental education where by means of personal experience, opinions and presentation talent of the interpreter particular audience is provided with knowledge in active communication thus promoting careful and respectful attitude to nature and living environment.