

OECD confirms German government's course towards ecological modernisation in Germany Presentation of environmental performance review

In its environmental performance review submitted to Federal Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin today, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) confirms the German government's course towards ecological modernisation, concluding that Germany values environmental protection and acknowledging impressive progress in this sector, particularly in the new Länder. Advances have been made above all in decoupling economic growth from resource consumption and pollution. The head of the OECD environmental directorate Joke Waller-Hunter expressed the organisation's recommendations for how Germany can raise its comparatively high level of environmental protection still further.

Federal Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin expressed his thanks for the expertly and carefully prepared review. "The OECD performance reviews have proved to be useful and helpful for promoting national debate about the environment as well as for further developing joint strategies in the Member States," he said. "For us, the OECD's recommendations are both acknowledgement and incentive. The OECD plans to publish the whole report in the spring of this year, and I will open it for discussion to the public to further accelerate the ecological renewal which we have started."

As an organisation of important industrial countries, the OECD pays particular attention to the integration of environmental, economic and social needs. It approves, for example, the ecological tax reform as part of a comprehensive reform for obtaining a "double dividend": improving the environmental situation while at the same time generating employment. The review considers the eco-tax to be an important step towards improving energy efficiency and energy saving, without increasing the total tax burden. Like the Renewable Energy Sources Act, the eco-tax is an important climate protection measure by the German government, although in the view of the OECD the steering effect should be reinforced. The OECD sees a need for further action in climate protection in the transport sector especially. "CO₂ emissions from the transport sector certainly play a key role in climate protection," said Trittin, "and this is why we placed appropriate emphasis on this sector in the national climate protection programme which the German government decided last year" said Trittin.

Trittin also feels that the OECD recommendations for the nature conservation and agriculture sectors are also confirmed in the light of current developments - i.e. the occurrence of BSE. "In the interests of both effective consumer protection, and the conservation of natural and landscape diversity, agriculture as a whole needs to be geared more towards ecological requirements. The amendment to the Federal Nature Conservation Act currently under preparation will play an important role in this," Trittin said.

The "Environmental Review" Programme, initiated by the environment ministers, has been carried out by the OECD since 1992, when Germany, together with Iceland, was one of the first countries to submit to an environmental performance review. The current review was compiled in a process lasting about a year, during which consultations were held with the German government, members of the Bundestag, Länder representatives, and representatives

from environmental and economic associations, unions and scientific advisory committees. The complete review will also be made available to the Bundestag and Länder in the spring.

The OECD environmental performance review's "conclusions and recommendations" for Germany are available from the Federal Environment Ministry's press office (+49 1888 305 2015/2018) or via the Homepage of the Ministry's website (http://www.bmu.de/english/press_releases/archive/3623click here).

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