



# Recommendation of the Council on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control



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## Background Information

The Recommendation on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control was adopted by the OECD Council on 31 January 1991. The Recommendation aims to achieve and maintain steady decoupling of natural resource use, risks from hazardous substances and pollutant releases from production, use and disposal of goods and services. To that effect, the Recommendation calls for a comprehensive approach to pollution prevention and control, considering the whole life cycle of substances and products and all environmental media that pollutants are released to.

Since its adoption, the [1991 Recommendation](#) inspired profound legislative changes among most Adherents (all of which are OECD Members). Some of the changes were in the form of policies and instruments that transcend environmental media and promote holistic solutions to environmental challenges. However, Adherents' legislation, policies and practices have advanced substantially in the area of integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) over the last 30 years.

The Recommendation was revised on 29 January 2024 in order to reflect progress in the adoption of the IPPC approach over the last 30 years and incorporates in its main body the Annex to the 1991 version of the Recommendation ("Guidance on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control"). The scope of the Recommendation has been extended by integrating the best available techniques (BAT) approach as one of the methods to design instruments to prevent and control pollution.

### ***Scope and structure of the Recommendation***

The Recommendation outlines the main principles and policy aspects of integrated pollution prevention and control and provides for a range of management instruments and technical methods for their implementation.

The main body of the Recommendation is divided into 6 sections, namely:

- General Principles on Integrated Pollution Prevent and Control
- Essential Policy Aspects
- Legislative Aspect
- Institutional Measures
- Management Instruments
- Technical Methods

The Recommendation provides that Adherents should consider the overall environmental performance of activities across media (air, water and soil), resources (material, energy, water) and the life cycle of substances and products, and promote less polluting, low-carbon and more circular technologies.

Integrated environmental permitting that covers all releases and processes and accounts for BAT is a fundamental instrument for such integration. BAT are state-of-the-art techniques developed at a scale that enables implementation under economically and technically viable conditions. The Recommendation suggests an approach to determining BAT, which is based on the 2020 [Guidance Document](#) on Determining BAT, BAT-Associated Environmental Performance Levels and BAT-Based Permit Conditions.

The Recommendation calls for linkages with other key instruments of environmental management, such as holistic policy planning, environmental assessment, chemicals management, natural resource management, compliance assurance, land-use planning and economic instruments. These instruments should rely on sound monitoring, information management and life cycle analysis.

### ***A broad and inclusive consultation process for revising the Recommendation***

The revision of the Recommendation was undertaken by EPOC and its Working Party on Environmental Performance (WPEP) in collaboration with the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee (CBC). The informal Expert Group on BAT that includes more than 150 representatives of OECD Members and non-Members, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, industry and academia, also contributed to the process.

### ***Dissemination and implementation tools***

EPOC, including through its relevant subsidiary bodies, will continue to support Adherents' efforts to implement the Recommendation through existing tools, notably [Environmental Performance Reviews](#). The CBC will continue its BAT-related work through its Expert Group on BAT, which provides an international forum with recognised experience on information sharing and cross-country analyses on BAT.

EPOC will also, in co-operation with the CBC, report to Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the Recommendation no later than five years following its revision and at least every ten years thereafter.

*For further information, please consult: <https://www.iomctoolbox.org>, <https://oe.cd/epr>.  
Contact information: [env.contact@oecd.org](mailto:env.contact@oecd.org).*

## **Implementation**

The 1996 [report](#) has been approved by the Pollution Prevention and Control Group and presented to the Environment Policy Committee, which has oversight responsibility for implementation of the Recommendation.

**THE COUNCIL,**

**HAVING REGARD** to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of 14 December 1960;

**HAVING REGARD** to the standards developed by the OECD on environmental assessment, pollutant release and transfer registers, material flows and resource productivity, environmental information and reporting, and environmentally sound management of waste;

**RECOGNISING** that the use of best available techniques and best environmental practices for pollution prevention and control is required by the United Nations Minamata and Stockholm Conventions on chemical pollution prevention;

**CONSIDERING** that substances released and/or accumulated in the environment can pose risks to human health and the environment, and that controls over releases of a substance to one environmental medium can result in shifting the substance to another environmental medium;

**CONSIDERING** significant progress made by most countries in preventing and controlling pollution across environmental media;

**RECOGNISING** that Members and non-Members having adhered to this Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”) have different legal and institutional frameworks through which they will implement this Recommendation.

**On the proposal of the Environment Policy Committee:**

**General Principles on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control**

**I. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents practise integrated pollution prevention and control to prevent or minimise the risk of harm to the environment as a whole, recognising the integrated nature of the environment. To that effect, Adherents should:

1. Consider the entire life cycle of substances and products to reduce the holistic environmental impact in line with the concepts of a circular economy, resource efficiency, green/sustainable chemistry, and decarbonisation;
2. Anticipate effects of substances and activities (both new and existing) in all environmental media, including consideration of multiple pathways to exposure and transfer through the environment;
3. Consider the overall environmental performance of activities, covering emissions of pollutants to air, water and soil, generation of waste, use of resources (material, energy, water), energy efficiency, use of safer chemicals, noise, odour, prevention of accidents and restoration of the site upon closure; and
4. Ensure complementary use of effects-oriented policy instruments, such as environmental quality objectives, and source-oriented instruments, such as emission limits.

**Essential Policy Aspects**

**II. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents adopt policies, common to all aspects of environmental protection, in which they:

1. Promote the use of less polluting, low-carbon and more circular technologies, including energy conservation, rational use of resources, waste minimisation and substitution of harmful substances with safer alternatives;
2. Encourage precautionary action to mitigate the risk of significant harm to the environment despite the absence of complete information;
3. Provide for mechanisms to ensure that the public is informed and consulted in the evaluation of health and environmental effects of substances and activities as well as in the process of issuing environmental permits;
4. Integrate environmental considerations into private and public decision-making; and
5. Provide for cross-media compliance assurance.

### **Legislative Aspects**

**III. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents ensure that integration of pollution prevention and control is a common approach of all legislation that affects the environment. This includes not only specific environmental legislation but also legislation in other areas such as energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, extraction industries, tourism, development aid and taxes.

### **Institutional Measures**

**IV. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents adopt and apply institutional measures and administrative procedures necessary to implement the integrated approach, including:

1. Changing organisational structures and internal operational and decision-making procedures;
2. Establishing co-ordinating mechanisms within and among government bodies; and
3. Developing arrangements for co-operating internationally and among different levels of government within countries.

### **Management Instruments**

**V. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents implement a variety of management instruments to achieve integrated pollution prevention and control, including:

1. Issuing integrated environmental permits that cover all releases and processes and account for best available techniques (BAT), local environmental conditions and health-based standards;
2. Linking environmental instruments with land-use planning and natural resource management systems and the regulation of services such as transport and other communications;
3. Undertaking environmental assessment of projects, plans and programmes with a potentially significant impact on the environment;
4. Engaging in policy planning to develop strategies to achieve overall improvement of environmental quality;

5. Conducting compliance promotion, monitoring and enforcement activities integrated across all environmental aspects;
6. Using economic instruments; and
7. Encouraging development of cleaner technologies.

### **Technical Methods**

**VI. RECOMMENDS** that Adherents use the following technical methods to support management instruments to achieve integrated pollution prevention and control:

1. Determine BAT through a stepwise process that includes identifying the sectors or subsectors amenable to adoption of BAT, obtaining multi-stakeholder technical and economic input on the considered techniques, including their environmental performance, collecting and evaluating data, establishing national BAT-based standards, deriving permit limits, establishing monitoring requirements and other permit conditions, and continuous collection of information on emerging techniques;
2. Analyse each stage of the commercial life cycle of a substance or a product from design through manufacture, to use and end-of-life disposal, as well as analysis of the environmental life cycle, including transformation and transfer of chemical substances through all environmental media;
3. Analyse all pathways of exposure to human or ecological receptors;
4. Use inventories of releases to all environmental media from installations, such as pollution release and transfer registers, coupled with inventories of inputs and production volumes to enable development of material flow accounts; and
5. Monitor the state of the environmental media, the ecosystems they support, and the condition of cultural and aesthetic assets to assess respective trends.

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**VII. INVITES** the Secretary-General and Adherents to disseminate the Recommendation.

**VIII. INVITES** non-Adherents to take account of and adhere to the Recommendation.

**IX. INSTRUCTS** the Environment Policy Committee, in co-operation with the Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee, to:

1. Serve as a forum for exchanging information, good practices and innovative experiences with respect to the implementation of this Recommendation;
2. Support and facilitate Adherents' efforts to implement this Recommendation, in co-operation with other relevant international organisations and stakeholders, including through the use of OECD environmental performance reviews and technical guidance on the implementation of BAT; and
3. Report to Council on the implementation, dissemination, and continued relevance of this Recommendation no later than five years following its revision and at least every ten years thereafter.

## About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD Member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union takes part in the work of the OECD.

## OECD Legal Instruments

Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, around 460 substantive legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **Decisions** are adopted by Council and are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. They set out specific rights and obligations and may contain monitoring mechanisms.
- **Recommendations** are adopted by Council and are not legally binding. They represent a political commitment to the principles they contain and entail an expectation that Adherents will do their best to implement them.
- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
- **International Agreements** are negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several other types of substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.