



Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Environmental Performance of Government

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Background Information

The Recommendation on Improving the Environmental Performance of Government Recommendation was adopted by the OECD Council on 20 February 1996 on the proposal of the Environment Policy Committee. The Recommendation calls on Adherents to develop and apply strategies for continually improving the environmental performance of their governments by integrating environmental considerations into all facets of government operations and facilities, including related decision-making processes.

THE COUNCIL,

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

RECOGNISING the importance of governments of Member countries demonstrating leadership by achieving the highest standards of environmental performance in their facilities and operations;

CONSIDERING that governments are significant consumers and producers of goods and services, and that through their procurement policies and improving the environmental performance of their facilities and operations, they can help to bring about more sustainable patterns of consumption and production;

MINDFUL of the commitments made by Member countries in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development to change patterns of consumption and production and to review and improve Government procurement policies, and of the Work Programme adopted by the Decision of the Third Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 1995;

NOTING also that improving the environmental performance of government facilities and operations can have positive effects and benefits beyond the environmental sphere, including the reduction of operating costs and the creation of employment;

AWARE that G-7 Ministers of Environment, meeting in Hamilton, Canada, in May 1995, emphasised their commitment to improving the environmental performance of their governments' operations, and called upon the OECD to support and broaden their efforts;

I. RECOMMENDS that Member countries should develop and apply strategies for continually improving the environmental performance of their governments by integrating environmental considerations into all facets of government operations and facilities, including related decision-making processes.

II. RECOMMENDS to this effect that Member countries should:

1. Identify goals and set targets and time frames for optimising the use of energy, water and materials in day-to-day operations, in particular through reduction, re-use, recycling and recovery measures;
2. Encourage the efficient and optimal use and conservation of natural resources and minimise the generation of waste in the design, construction, renovation and decommissioning of government buildings and facilities;
3. Establish and implement policies for the procurement of environmentally sound products and services for use within governments;
4. Apply sound management principles, and in particular environmental management system approaches, at each stage of the development and operation of government-owned or operated facilities;
5. Establish appropriate systems to monitor progress and evaluate strategies for improving environmental performance;
6. Apply systematic analysis and, as appropriate, economic evaluation and environmental impact assessment procedures to the selection of:
 - Major public investment projects;
 - Incentive and disincentive instruments for improving efficiency; and,
 - Technologies to enhance environmental performance.

III. FURTHER RECOMMENDS that Member countries should:

1. Establish effective mechanisms for consultation and co-ordination among ministries and agencies to facilitate the integration of environmental considerations with other considerations in decision-making processes related to government operations and facilities;
2. Develop the awareness of government officials to environmental considerations through, for example, the establishment and development of training programmes, awareness-raising incentives and awards programmes, codes of practice, directives and regulations;
3. Encourage and promote actions at all other levels of government and the public sector to continually improve the environmental performance of their operations and facilities and to observe the same high standards as central Government in this regard;
4. Co-operate in pilot projects, involving as appropriate the private sector, related to procurement practices and to the environmentally sound management of government facilities and operations;
5. Exchange views on a regular basis and share data and information on the results of their efforts to improve the environmental performance of their governments and to give effect to this Recommendation.

IV. INVITES the Environment Policy Committee to:

1. Support efforts by Member countries to improve the environmental performance of government operations and facilities by, *inter alia*, facilitating the process of information sharing, for example through collecting and disseminating "best practice" in Member countries;
2. Monitor, assess and report on Member country implementation of this Recommendation, in particular by means of the OECD's Programme of Country Environmental Performance Reviews; and,
3. Report to the Council on the state of progress in implementing this Recommendation, and on any barriers to further progress, within three years following its adoption.

V. FURTHER INVITES the Environment Policy Committee to support, as appropriate, for instance through provision of advice and expertise, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in the improvement of its own environmental performance, as set out in Council Resolution C(96)40/FINAL.

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