

## DISCUSSION PAPER ENVIRONMENT

### Conference on the Donor Coordination in the Western Balkans and Turkey Tirana, 2-3 April 2009

There is a large gap between levels of protection in the EU Member States and the Western Balkans and Turkey. Full compliance with the Community's environmental *acquis* will probably be achievable only in the long term. However, integration of these countries will provide a considerable increase in biodiversity within Europe in view of their vast areas of unspoilt nature.

The candidate countries should define and start implementing realistic national strategies before accession to bring about gradual alignment in the long term. This strategy must include priority areas of action, key objectives to be attained by the date of accession, and timetables for the subsequent achievement of compliance.

The challenges to be met by Western Balkans and Turkey are of several kinds:

- the legislative challenge: transposition of the environmental *acquis* requires a preliminary comprehensive analysis of the laws of the countries in order that priorities may be established;
- the institutional challenge: strengthen their administrative structures, become more efficient and coordinate the departments responsible for managing environment policy;
- the financial challenge: the formulation of financing strategies is essential and should be given immediate priority

The main sector-specific challenges:

- air pollution: the first step must be to identify zones and agglomerations where EU limits are being exceeded; it is equally important to modernise refineries so that they comply with European standards;
- waste management
- water pollution: major investment programmes to improve drinking water quality and waste water management are under way in most of the countries;
- industrial pollution control and risk management: this area needs special attention in areas where there are numerous heavily-polluting industrial and energy production facilities;
- nuclear safety and radiation protection: adoption and transposition of relevant EU legislation

The Commission has come up with a set of priority objectives relating to:

- air pollution;
- water pollution;

- waste management.

Western Balkans and Turkey must fill in the gaps in their legislation and administrative rules to improve the environment while at the same time improving the economy and competitiveness.

Other issues which needed to be considered:

- how to promote energy efficiency, cleaner technologies and waste minimisation and integrating recycling can be integrated into national economic and sectoral policies;
- how industrial and agricultural production can be guided towards sustainable development;
- how environmental gains can be maintained during the transition period.

Application of the environmental *acquis* will require the creation of costly infrastructure for:

- the supply of drinking water;
- waste water management;
- large combustion plants;
- waste management.

The countries must themselves mobilise the resources they need to implement the environmental *acquis*. Community and the Member States (bilateral programmes) have an important role to play.

Community pre-accession assistance for the environment is delivered through the Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA).

To enable resources to be used efficiently, it is important to coordinate, focus and target outside aid. The Commission has therefore decided to broaden the dialogue and cooperation with the Member States and the international financial institutions. It will also provide both legal and administrative technical assistance and advice to the countries regarding implementation of the environmental *acquis*.

Enlargement offers challenges and opportunities for the environment not only in the candidate countries, but for Europe as a whole. It should therefore be seen as part of the process of sustainable development by integration of environmental issues into all policy areas.