



To receive *Environmental Policy and Law* by e-mail, send a message with the text "get weeklyupdates" to office@rac.org.ua

Review's Archive: www.rac.org.ua/en/review/biweekly-review
©Resource & Analysis Center "Society and Environment"

HIGHLIGHTS

Ukraine starts transboundary environmental impact assessment for nuclear power plants

At the beginning of April the Ministry of Environment sent [official notification](#), thereby starting transboundary environmental impact assessment procedure for two nuclear power plants in Ukraine (Zaporizhska and Yuzho-Ukrainska NPPs) in line with the Espoo Convention. The notification was sent to Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Belarus, Moldova, Austria and Hungary.

Formally, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) is applied to the existing nuclear power plants at their life cycle "operation". At the same time, environmental impact assessment of the operation of these NPPs is linked to life time extension of specific nuclear units. The notification explicitly states that the outcomes of the transboundary consultations, including public participation in respective countries, will be taken into account when taking a decision to extend life time of nuclear units 3 at Yuzhno-Ukrainska NPP and 3-6 at Zaporizhska NPP.

The fact an EIA is carried out for nuclear facilities is important by itself. This suggests that systemic changes took place regarding the attitude by state-run Energoatom company and all respective public authorities. It is unclear, though, how the outcomes of the EIA and consultations can be integrated into the decision on life time extension of specific units. Still, the EIA process can produce interesting results. In particular, no environmental impacts were studied before the construction of these units in Soviet times (except for radiation impacts). New research, which is part of the process, can trigger public and expert discussions as to the environmental impacts of the nuclear industry in Ukraine, including health impacts.

The Espoo Convention – is an international treaty, which sets an obligation to carry out transboundary impact assessment for certain planned activities. Its implementation in nuclear field in Ukraine requires specific measures, as argued in our thematic [policy paper](#) (2014).

The forests we are losing

On April 13, 2017 State Statistics Service published latest data regarding forestry industry operations in 2016. Official data reveal that fuel wood comprised 57,6% of all commercial wood harvested (the remaining 42,2% represent unprocessed timber). Most commercial wood was harvested through "sanitary" logging (47,3%) and through main-use logging (43%). Illegal logging was confirmed in 7506 cases in 2016. Yet, these numbers are far from reality given the numerous photo evidences, including aerial photos.

The import ban imposed on unprocessed timber did not contribute to sustainable and environmental balanced forestry practices. On the contrary, the forestry sector is pushed to use more sophisticated illegal business tools, such as selling commercial wood as wasted wood while lack of control and adequate liability facilitates these illegal practices.

Official data suggest that forests occupy 15,9% of the territory of Ukraine in 2015. Some independent experts estimate forests share to be 11% only due to illegal logging. Introducing sustainable management approaches in forests should be based on realistic analysis of the situation, which in turn requires effective monitoring system regarding forests use (including an interactive logging map).

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT: ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

At the beginning of April UN Development Programme presented 2016 Human Development Index ([report for 2016](#)). To addition to well-known country rating, 2016 Human Development Report offers a [dashboard on sustainable development](#), which covers 15 indicators in three areas: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability. Environmental sustainability (see excerpt table below) includes five indicators: renewable energy consumption, CO₂ emissions (per capita and annual change), forests area and freshwater withdrawals.

Unlike HDR, the sustainable development dashboard does not offer a country rating (index), but represents the context for human development in a specific country.

Countries were grouped by each indicator (except for forest share in total territory), each groups representing approximately equal number of countries. The outcome of the grouping is shown by respective coloring (top-group, medium and lowest).

Out of four indicators available for Ukraine, the country found itself in the lowest group by two indicators (renewable energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions per capita) and in the medium group by two other indicators (annual forest area change and freshwater withdrawals).

		Environmental sustainability					
		Renewable energy consumption	Carbon dioxide emissions		Forest area		Fresh water withdrawals
HDI rank	Country	(% of total final energy consumption)	Per capita (tonnes)	Average annual change (%)	(% of total land area) ^a	Change (%)	(% of total renewable water resources) ^c
		2012 ^b	2013	1990/2013	2015	1990-2015	2005-2014
84	Ukraine	2,8	6,0	..	16,7	4,1	8,5
86	Jordan	3,1	3,4	0,5	1,1	-0,6	92,4
87	Peru	28,2	1,9	2,9	57,8	-5,1	0,7
87	Thailand	23,0	4,5	4,6	32,1	17,1	13,1
89	Ecuador	13,4	2,8	2,3	50,5	-4,4	2,2
90	China	18,4	7,6	5,6	22,2	32,6	19,5
91	Fiji	12,2	1,9	2,4	55,7	6,7	0,3

Source: UNDP, 2017.

Note, forests share did not grow by 4% since 1990 (forests share in total land area raised from 15,47% in 1990 to 16,15% in 2014). Indicated 4% likely mean total change in actual forest area, not their share in the territory.

Carbon dioxide emissions is an indicator for climate sustainability of the economy. Yet, the indicator used – tonnes of CO₂/capita/year – is not the best for assessing sustainability. It would be more appropriate in our view to use carbon intensity of the economy indicator, encompassing all greenhouse gases emissions per GDP unit.

Current sustainable development strategy “Ukraine – 2020” does not really offer sustainability indicators in none of the three areas: environmental, social and economic. We believe sustainable development should be measured by a comprehensive indicators framework, which would represent all three areas. In particular, such framework could be developed based on OECD green growth methodology, as [applied on pilot basis by our Center in Ukraine](#).