



# Western Balkan Countries

20 years of cooperation with the EEA  
Key developments, achievements and the way ahead

European Environment Agency



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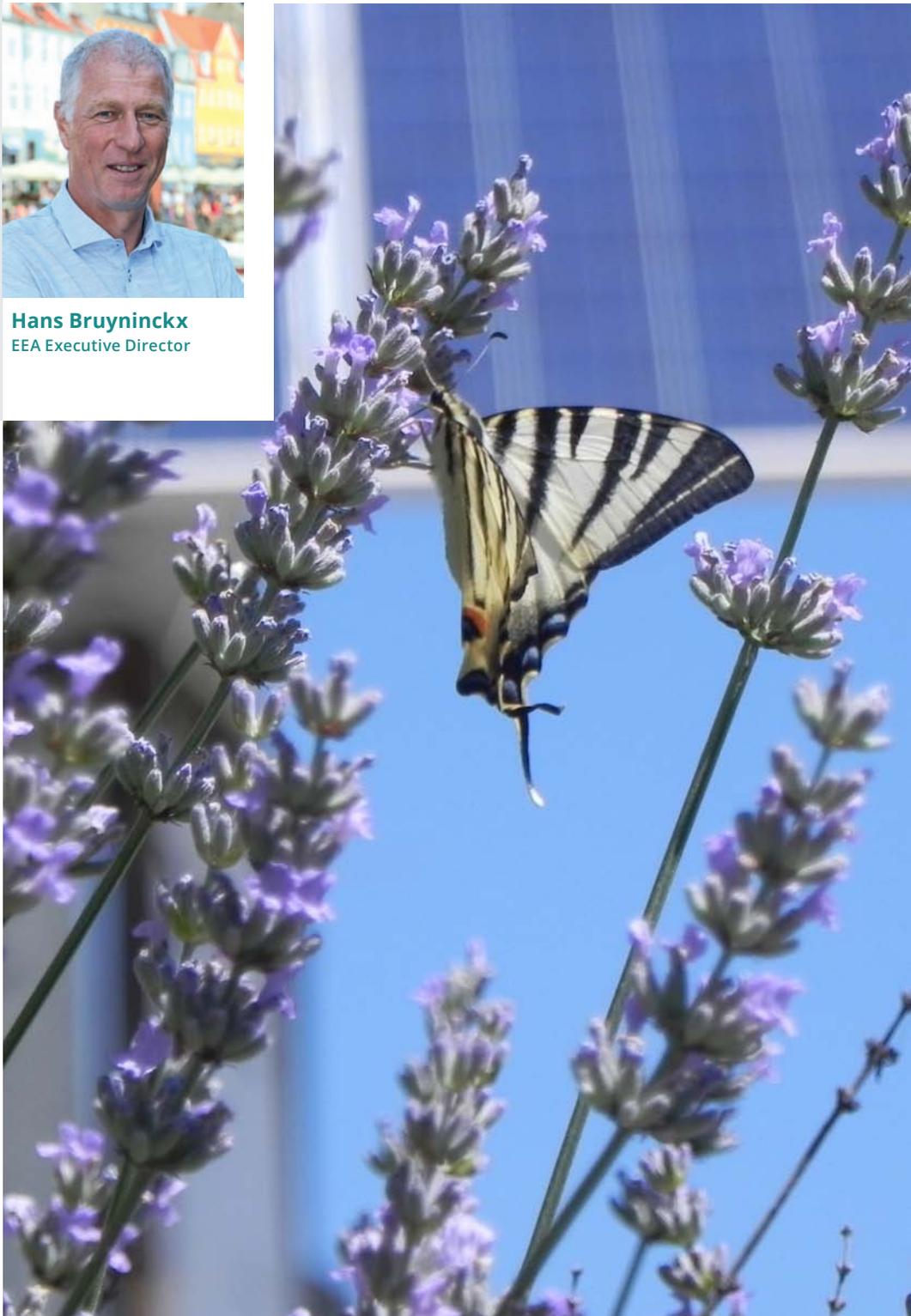
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# Foreword



**Hans Bruyninckx**  
EEA Executive Director



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# Western Balkans: 20 years of sharing environmental information

Cooperation with our partners from the Western Balkan region dates back to the early days of the EEA. Over the past 20 years, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\* have actively collaborated with us in a range of activities, working alongside other European countries for the benefit of the environment and the people in the Western Balkans and further afield.

## A relationship built on commitment and solidarity

This relationship has been built slowly but surely, gradually expanding to full participation in the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) and contributing valuable input to Eionet's mission to share environmental information across Europe with the aim of bringing about improvements in our shared environment. It has also been progressively embedded in the EEA's last three multiannual work programmes. This is a relationship built on high commitment and solidarity that benefits all concerned and the environment above all.

During this time, the Western Balkans have been able to build partnerships, develop their expertise and deepen their capacity to monitor and report on the environmental challenges they face, while the EEA and other Eionet members have benefited from the flow of reliable and relevant data that they have been able to produce. The fact that the Western Balkan partners have been fully recognised as EEA cooperating countries and an integral part of Eionet is testimony to the hard work and efforts of many colleagues in the countries.

This publication is a short overview of the key developments in, and achievements of, the Western Balkan countries' cooperation with the EEA over the past 20 years and a glimpse into the way ahead as the Agency and Eionet celebrate their 25th anniversary. It gives our partners in the Western Balkans the opportunity to describe developments from their perspective.

We would like to thank all the partners for their dedication, continuing support and high level of commitment over the years. We look forward to stepping up our work together for the benefit of our shared environment.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence



# Introduction

The Western Balkans are an integral part of the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet). The original EEA and Eionet Regulation provided the basis for cooperation based around sharing data, information and expertise. This was the starting point underpinning the EEA's cooperation with the Western Balkan region over 20 years ago.

The six Western Balkans, seen in the broader context of the 39 Eionet countries, face a common set of environmental challenges, each to a lesser or greater degree. Pollution — especially air pollution in urban and industrial areas — and the discharge of wastewater are taking a toll on human health and having a negative effect on the environment. Land use is changing — agricultural land is being abandoned as people move to the cities and the coasts, causing increasing urban sprawl and resulting in the loss of coastal habitats. Municipal authorities in towns and cities are struggling to dispose of the increasing amounts of waste generated.

## A unique part of Europe for wildlife

At the same time, the region has plenty to protect and conserve. It has a unique and varied geography, comprising habitats ranging from coastal lagoons and wetlands to Mediterranean forests, freshwater wetlands, mountain forests and the barren rocky karstic terrain. These are home to

remarkable biodiversity, including many endemic species and habitats. This makes the Western Balkans a unique part of Europe for wildlife and plants.

A basic precondition for safeguarding the environment is access to quality data, allowing the scale of challenges to be assessed and the measures required to be identified. This is where the relationship between the EEA and its partner countries comes in.

## Progressive integration into Eionet activities

Since cooperation began in 1997 — initially with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia — the Western Balkan partners have gradually engaged in many of the regular environmental reporting activities of the EEA and Eionet. These have included contributing to regular assessment reports, helping to develop reporting systems based on indicators, especially the EEA core set of indicators, and promoting capacity development and networking. Environment managers and experts have benefited from attending Eionet workshops on a wide range of subjects and from networking with their colleagues across the European continent.

EU funding instruments have supported the EEA/Eionet cooperation with the Western Balkan beneficiaries since 1997 (initially through Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation programme — CARDS — and then through the Instrument for Pre-

accession Assistance — IPA). This external funding has facilitated the work of the Western Balkans and their progressive integration into the group of 'EEA cooperating countries', allowing them to fully participate in the whole range of EEA regular data flows and indicator and assessment processes. The flow of data between Western Balkan experts and the EEA is a clear and tangible sign of the strength of this partnership. An overview of Eionet's core data flows is published by the EEA annually. The [latest report](#)<sup>1</sup> presents the results of data collected in 2017 for 10 Eionet core data flows across all Eionet countries, summarising the evaluation of close to 1.000 data deliveries.

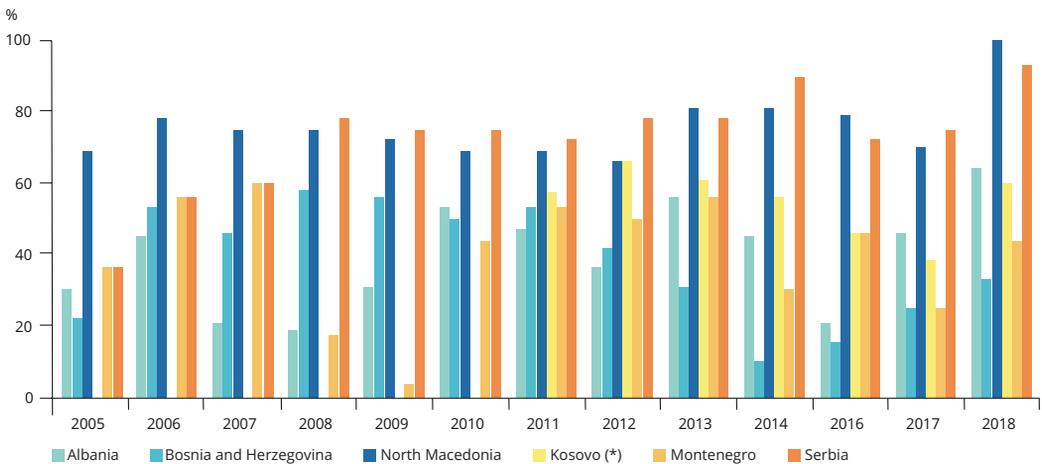
## Benchmarking performance

The annual publication of the agreed data flows shows progress against the agreed reporting criteria (timeliness and data quality) to allow countries to identify and prioritise the resources they need for regular reporting procedures. Information submitted by the Western Balkans allows them to benchmark their performance against that of EU and other EEA member countries, bringing them closer to a process under which formal reporting obligations have to be met.

Figure 1 summarises the Western Balkan countries performance in responding to the Eionet priority data flows over the period 2005-2018.

Data and information have to be seen alongside capacities in national

Figure 1 Western Balkan countries' delivery of Eionet core data, 2005-2018



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)

organisational and human networks, which also have to be strengthened and aligned to the level of the EEA member countries to ensure regular communication, data exchange and participation in major EEA/Eionet processes.

## Development of Indicators

The development of the Western Balkans' indicators process between 2004 and 2011, involving tailored projects, regional workshops and country visits, is another example of how cooperation between the EEA and the Western Balkans has responded to needs. At the start of this activity, the core set of EEA indicators was not used in the region. By the end of this process, the number in use had reached a total of 25, which formed the basis for a dedicated indicator-based report in 2012, providing a baseline against which to measure environmental progress. By 2012, the countries were considered to be fully integrated into Eionet's activities, alongside the 33 EEA member countries.

## Further engagement

With the expanding networks and experts on board at the regular National Focal Point (NFP) and National Reference Centre (NRC) meetings, interest in further engagement and closer partnership also evolved. Taking part in the whole range of Eionet activities and close engagement with Eionet were also viewed as a precursor for EEA membership. In this respect, Croatia's experience as a cooperating country was invaluable in enabling its smooth transition to EEA membership.

This publication provides a snapshot of the evolving context of the relationship between the EEA and the Western Balkans in recent years. It covers the context of the cooperation, as seen by the partners in these countries, gives some good practice examples and summarises progress to date, and points to the environmental challenges that remain.





# Albania



**Albania has been cooperating with the EEA since 2002**  
**National Focal Point: National Environment Agency**

# Albania

## Context

Albania began paying serious attention to environmental issues in the early 1990s. The first legislation on the environment was passed in 1993 and amended in 1998. This was supplemented by the 1994 National Environmental Action Plan and by the Law on Environmental Protection in 2002.

Together, these legislative acts represent the first attempt by Albanian policymakers to set some short-term priorities for taking better care of the environment. They address areas including environmental monitoring, pollution standards, environmental assessment, the needs of coastal areas and the regeneration of polluted areas. This attempt also began the process of harmonising Albanian efforts to ensure environmental protection to EU standards and of improving the national capacity for putting environmental policy into practice.

Albania's current National Environment Agency was created in 2011 by reorganising the previous Environment and Forest Agency. It is responsible for environmental monitoring based on indicators, preparing the annual State of the environment report and reporting to the EEA.

## Good practice and progress

Albania has made progress in terms of both legislation and the situation on the ground in recent years. The year 2011 saw a new law on environmental protection<sup>2</sup>





enter into force, which aimed to consolidate a national and regional network of environmental institutions capable of putting environmental policy into practice. Since 2013, new laws governing the conduct of environmental impact assessments and the procedures for granting environmental permissions have been passed, while others on air quality and a national strategy on energy have been amended or updated. Improving environmental and strategic impact assessments is a priority in order to align them with the EU environmental acquis.

Progress has been made on completing a national legal framework for waste management in accordance with the EU Waste Framework Directive, although full implementation is still some way off. It is increasingly necessary to raise public awareness of how to deal with waste more sustainably, and landfilling need to be done in line with EU standards. The year 2011 saw a new law on integrated waste management adopted, based on the EU directive of the same name. In line with Albania's decentralised approach to managing waste, by 2014, seven regional action plans for Gjirokastra, Kukesi, Lezha, Shkodra, Diber, Fier and Berat had been drafted and approved, while at the local level nearly all of the country's 61 municipalities had completed local waste management plans.

Photos from Albania have been kindly provided by:



Legislative developments have been mirrored by improvements on the ground. Better infrastructure and efforts to standardise the regulations governing used cars and vehicles have led to improvements in air quality in Tirana — data from the assessment period 2011-2013 showed a 20-30 % decrease in concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less) and PM<sub>2.5</sub> (particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less). Investment in waste water treatment plants in some of Albania’s main cities has helped produce significant improvements in the quality of coastal bathing water; in 2018, over 85 % of beaches had water quality classified as **good or excellent**.<sup>3</sup> Monitoring capacity has also improved: as of 2013, 60 % of seaside monitoring stations were classified as of either good or excellent quality.

Designating new protected areas has been one of the Albanian government’s main environmental priorities in recent years, as articulated in the **national strategy on**

**biodiversity**.<sup>4</sup> This has seen the surface area of protected areas increase from 4 % of the total surface area to 18.3 % in 2013, with benefits for conserving biodiversity not only within the areas themselves but also in surrounding areas.

## Environmental challenges

As with other countries in the Western Balkans, the prospect of a closer relationship with the EU provides an incentive for Albania to bring its environmental law and practice into line with the environmental acquis. Progress has been made in transposing EU directives on the environment, but achieving effective implementation on the ground remains a challenge. Further efforts are required on transposing key water directives.

Adopting a stronger approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation is another challenge, especially in terms of capacities and resources. Climate change is expected

Figure 2 Data flows from Albania, 2006-2018, compared with those from the EEA-39 countries

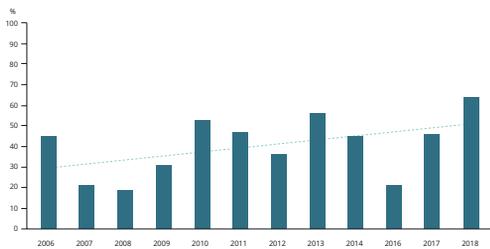
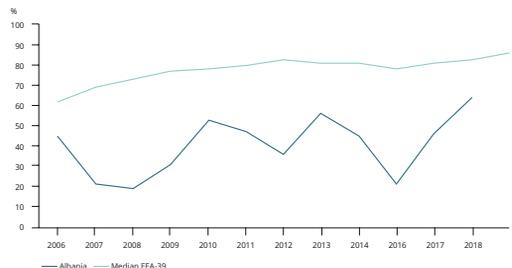


Figure 3 Data flows from Albania, 2006-2018, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)

to have a significant impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services, agricultural and hydroelectricity production, energy use and human health in Albania. Legislation and policy processes need to address global environmental trends at a national level and provide the structures through which to change people's behaviour and consumption and production patterns, which is one of the major causes of environmental pressures. Implementation of the Paris Agreement by adopting a national strategy and legislation on climate change and developing national energy and climate plans is an increasingly urgent priority for Albania.

## Data

Albania has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2002. Figure 2 shows the data flows from Albania, 2006-2018, compared with those from the EEA-39 countries, while Figure 3 shows the trend in data delivery of data flows for Albania, from 2006 to 2018.

## Future developments

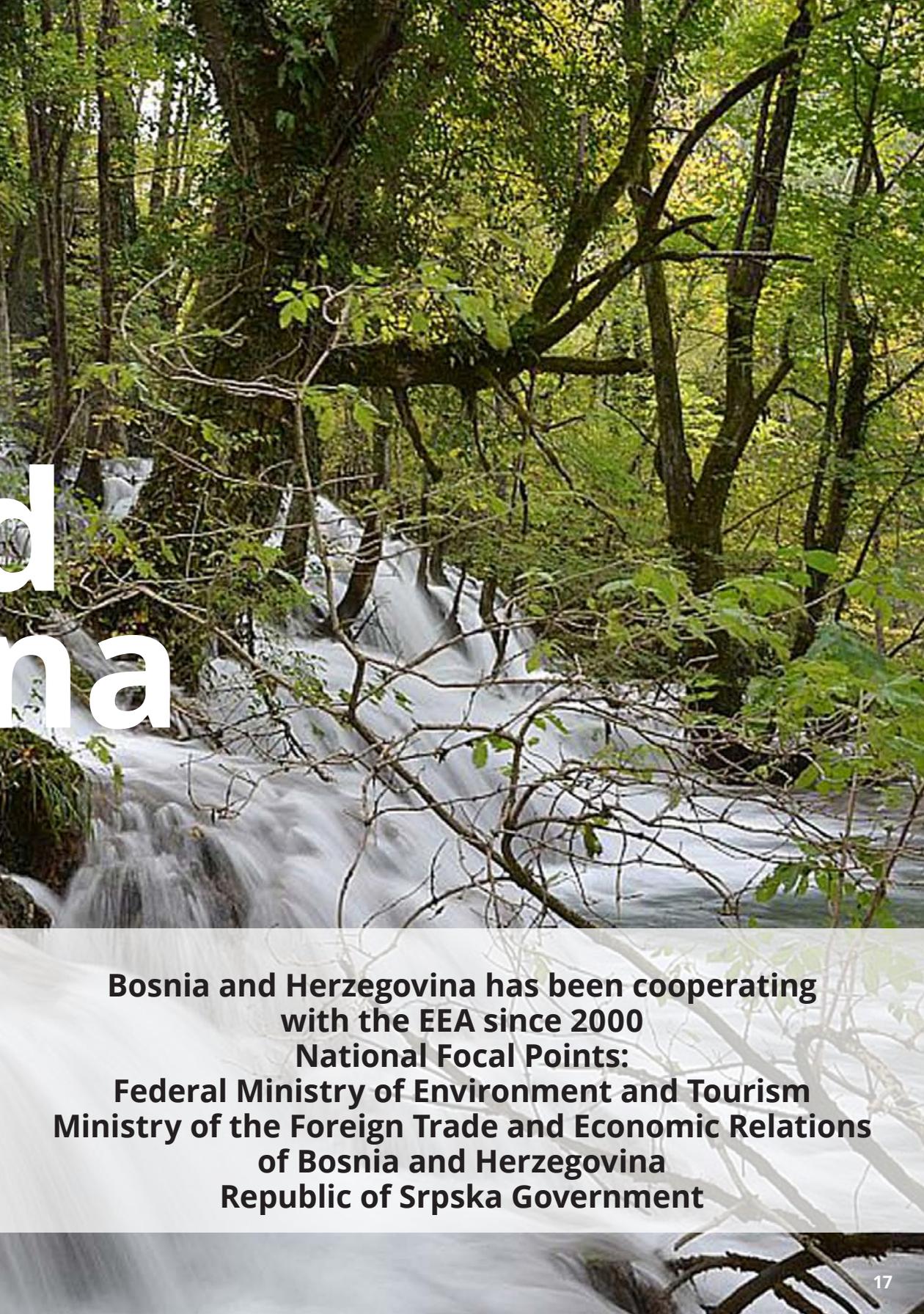
Albania's aspirations to become an EU member have acted as the main driver of adopting new laws on the environment and of moving closer to EU environmental standards. Since 2011, this has produced significant results and progress.

Albania's growing involvement with the EEA since cooperation began in 2002 — which has helped strengthen the country's capacity for making and implementing relevant policy and for more accurate reporting on the environment — is just one illustration of this.





# Bosnia and Herzegovina

A photograph of a waterfall in a dense forest. The water is white and frothy as it falls over several tiers of dark, mossy rocks. The surrounding trees are tall and thin, with vibrant green leaves. The scene is captured from a slightly low angle, looking up at the waterfall.

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**Bosnia and Herzegovina has been cooperating  
with the EEA since 2000  
National Focal Points:  
Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism  
Ministry of the Foreign Trade and Economic Relations  
of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Republic of Srpska Government**

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Context

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a relative newcomer to the issue of environmental protection — the [2012 State of the environment report](#)<sup>5</sup> was the first of its kind in the country and is generally seen as the foundation document on the subject.

By ratifying the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in November 2008, the State of BiH achieved the status of an EU potential candidate country and accepted the obligation to harmonise its legislation with the EU acquis and to create an institutional framework to implement legislation that is harmonised with EU requirements effectively. Authorities at all administrative levels in BiH are obliged to participate actively in the process of BiH's association with the EU through the process of legislative approximation with EU law and by preparing institutions at all levels for transposing the EU acquis and implementing and enforcing the transposed legislation. The SSA entered into force on 1 June 2015.

Responsibility for legislation on environmental issues is divided between two entities — the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). The district of Brčko (BD) and the cantonal/municipal level also have responsibilities in this regard. The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER) is the only institution with

nationwide jurisdiction on environmental issues. It also has the power to define policies and basic principles and is tasked with harmonising the plans of the various bodies of the two entities, the government and institutions.

Almost all environmental legislation operates at the level of the FBiH and the RS and at BD level, while international agreements and projects are coordinated by MoFTER.

## Good practice and progress

A large number of strategic documents, setting out strategies on areas including managing solid waste (2002), energy (2008) and biodiversity (2010) were adopted between 2000 and 2012. During this same period, BiH began reporting to international bodies on the environment and reporting on its compliance with international treaties, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2007), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2012) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (in 2009, 2012 and onwards). Other important texts, such as those on water policy and the environment, and a national strategy for biodiversity, are still awaiting adoption.

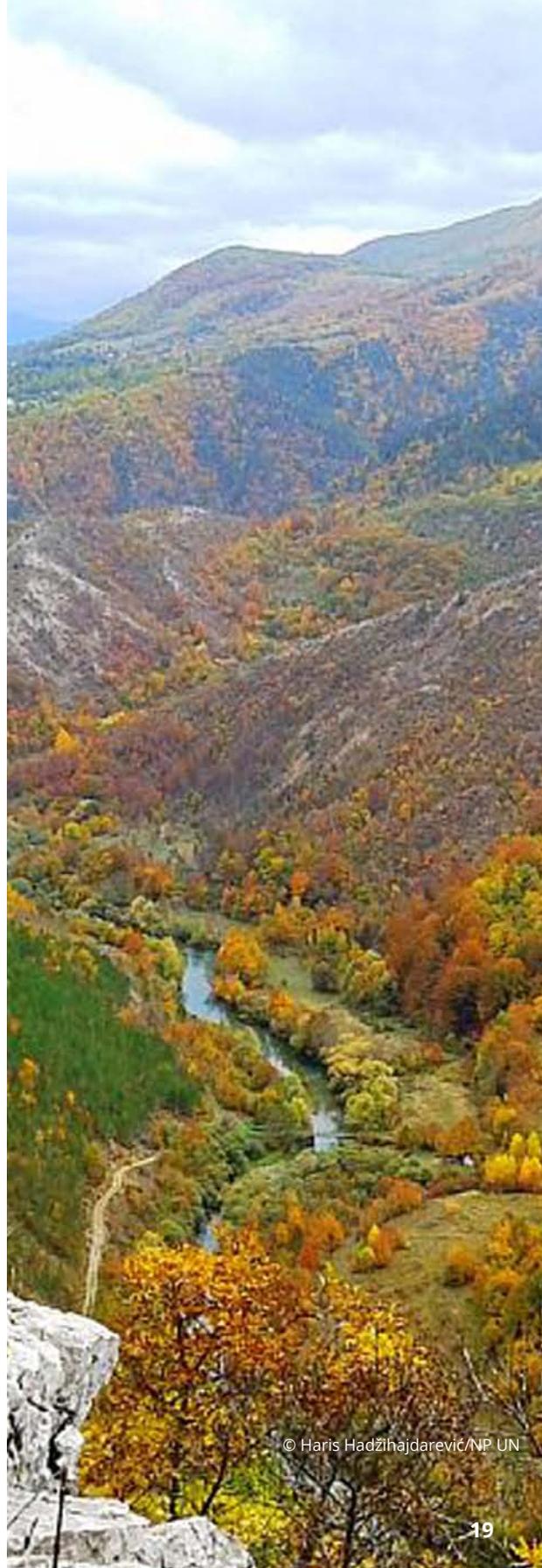
The diverse geography of BiH means that it

is home to an extremely wide range of flora and fauna, characterised by a high degree of endemic and relic forms of life. This includes more than 5 000 species and subspecies of vascular plants, more than 100 species of fish and over 320 species of birds.

Since 2011, efforts have been applied at all levels to improve the legal and policy framework on environmental protection in BiH. While further efforts are required, progress has been made regarding:

- improving the environmental permitting system and conducting environmental impact assessments;
- adopting subsidiary legislation on reducing emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants in the FBiH;
- adopting new laws on nature protection in the FBiH and the RS;
- improving waste legislation with regard to adopting strategic documents on waste;
- improving the legal framework on water management, in terms of amendments to the law on water in the FBiH.

BiH makes a relatively low contribution to greenhouse gas emissions because of its low patterns of energy generation and consumption. In 2005, BiH emitted a total of 24.14 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. Taking into account an estimated population of 3.85 million as well as calculation of GAINS (greenhouse gas-air pollution interactions and synergies) model, emissions per capita in BiH in 2005 came to 6.36 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (UN Economic Commission for Europe, 2011). It is becoming increasingly



urgent to start implementing the Paris Agreement by putting in place policies and measures, updating and implementing the climate change adaptation and low emissions development strategy and starting to develop an integrated national energy and climate plan.

## Environmental challenges

While progress has been made, inadequate treatment of wastewater continues to be a problem in BiH. In 2009, advances brought about by improving methods of treatment were observed, but this trend reversed slightly during 2010. In 2015, only a few municipalities in the FBiH and two municipalities in the RS had functioning facilities for treating sewage.

The quality of air in towns and cities is also a problem. During the winter months, concentrations of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and PM<sub>10</sub> (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less) in urban areas often exceed

limit values, and heavy smog is common. This is usually caused by emissions from traffic and other sources, such as small furnaces.

BiH has to establish a functioning air monitoring network throughout the country and ensure the harmonised collection of data in order to take appropriate measures against air pollution.

As a result of its complex structure, environmental governance in BiH suffers from a lack of integration between different institutions, which can make progress slow. To come closer to complying with the environmental acquis, the legal framework will need to be further developed; the administrative capacity will need to be strengthened; and monitoring systems will need to be put in place, while inter-institutional coordination among all authorities on environmental protection is improved.

Figure 4 Data flows from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005-2018

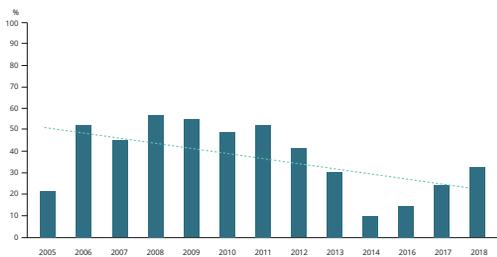
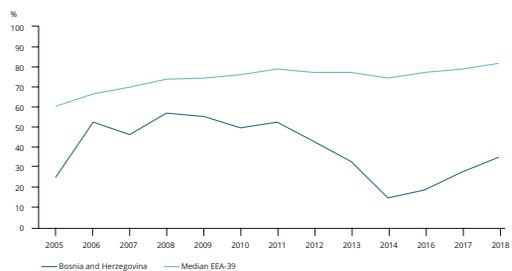


Figure 5 Data flows from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005-2018, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)



## Data

BiH has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2000. Figure 4 shows the data flows from BiH, 2005-2018, compared with those from the EEA-39 countries, while Figure 5 shows the trend in data delivery of data flows for BiH, from 2005 to 2018.

## Future developments

Efforts to harmonise domestic legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire* and its implementation, as required by the main international treaties on the environment, are ongoing. EU directives have been transposed into BiH law to a lesser or greater extent. The focus is now shifting towards implementation, following the adoption of BiH's environmental approximation strategy in 2018. To encourage this, there is a need to develop the necessary strategies and plans of action and to identify what resources are needed and how they should be used to fully implement the *acquis*.



# Kosovo



**Kosovo has been cooperating with the EEA since 2011  
National Focal Point: Kosovo Environment Protection  
Agency**

# Kosovo

## Context

The main basis for environmental law in Kosovo is the [2009 law on environmental protection](#).<sup>6</sup> The principal actor in the sector is the [Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency](#)<sup>7</sup> (KEPA), created in 2006, which is in charge of conducting environmental analysis, managing and maintaining the environmental monitoring network and providing information on the environment to policymakers. It publishes an annual report, which uses data collected by the national system for state of the environment monitoring and also includes data from other institutions with specific responsibilities in the sector.

The report focuses mainly on the state of the environment and responses and less on analysing drivers, pressures and impacts. It makes use of only a limited number of environmental indicators.

## Good practice and progress

Kosovo is still at the early stage of adapting and implementing environmental standards to bring them into line with those of the EU — in 2016 around 66 % of the environmental acquis had been transposed into national environmental legislation, according to the [European Commission progress report](#)<sup>8</sup> for that year.

During the period 2013-2018, Kosovo approved a [series of documents](#)<sup>9</sup> outlining what needs to be done in various policy areas, including the necessary measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation. These were the strategy for environmental protection and sustainable development 2013-2022, the national environmental action plan 2013-2017, the air quality strategy 2013-2021, the biodiversity strategy and action plan 2011-2020, the national strategy on water 2017-2022, and the strategy on waste and action plan 2013-2022. Other documents that are still pending approval are the framework climate change strategy and the management plan for river basins.

Kosovo is expanding its network of air quality monitoring stations, which, in 2015, consisted of 12 automated static stations, to improve its environmental monitoring system. In 2017, the country began making data available [online in real time](#).<sup>10</sup>

By 2016, Kosovo's share of territory in protected areas had reached 11.55 % of the total, comprising [173 different sites amounting to 126 070 hectares](#).<sup>11</sup>

Kosovo has been investing in the rehabilitation of industrial waste landfill





sites, closing down old landfill sites and building facilities for the temporary storage of hazardous waste.

## Environmental challenges

There is a strong demand for natural resources in Kosovo. For this reason, the energy sector, together with industry and transport, has a major impact on the environment. In 2016, coal — almost entirely lignite — accounted for 62 % of primary energy consumption, while renewable energy accounted for only around 11 %.<sup>12</sup> The trend in coal use has been increasing — usage during 2017 increased by 8 % compared with that during 2016 — so it remains a significant concern.

During the period 2006-2012, the growth in economic sites and infrastructures became significantly more intense than during the period 2000-2006, and thus became the most powerful driver of land cover development in Kosovo. During this same period, urban sprawl from new housing developments, which had been the main driver of changes in land use during the previous period, slowed down.

Kosovans are generating increasing amounts of waste, currently an average of 328 kg per person per year.<sup>13</sup> A key challenge will be to continue to increase the coverage of household waste collection and address the issue of illegal dumpsites.

The lack of waste water treatment plants continued to be a concern for the Kosovan water sector, although investment in building new plants is under way and access for the population has been growing. In 2017, 74 % of the population had access to waste water services, around 5 % more than in 2016.<sup>14</sup> Establishing an effective water monitoring system is another key challenge, as is implementing urgent and lasting measures to reduce water pollution.

## Data

Kosovo has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2011. Figure 6 presents the data flows from Kosovo for the period 2011-2017, while Figure 7 presents the data flows from Kosovo, 2005-2011, showing the trend in data delivery.

## Future developments

As the main body in charge of assessing, monitoring and reporting on Kosovo's environment, KEPA aims to fulfil its obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, within the framework of the European integration process, by establishing a fully functioning monitoring system and an efficient environmental information system that is capable of fulfilling reporting requirements. It is committed to further developing national environmental indicators and ongoing assessment of the state of the environment, as well as providing support to policymakers, so that they can make informed decisions, and helping to raise public awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving the environment.

Figure 6 Data flows from Kosovo, 2011-2017

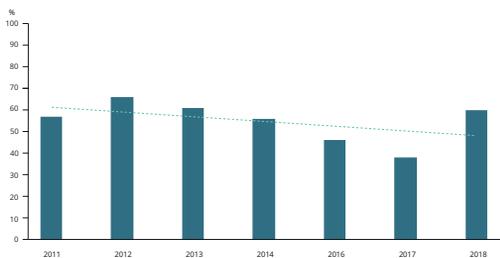
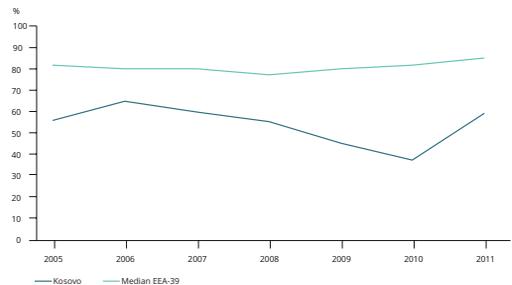


Figure 7 Data flows from Kosovo, 2005-2011, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)



In addition, enforcing legal provisions on environmental liability, damage and crime and implementing the polluter pays principle are essential, as is raising public awareness of environmental protection.

Improving the efficiency of waste recycling, including bottle deposit schemes, which boost the circular economy and the green economy, are priorities for the main environmental institutions and for the municipalities of Kosovo.

Providing wastewater treatment plants for all of Kosovo's main population centres is a process that will continue in the coming years, with the support of donors and the Government of Kosovo.

It is becoming increasingly urgent to start implementing the Paris Agreement by putting in place policies and measures, updating and implementing the climate change adaptation and low emissions development strategy and starting to develop an integrated national energy and climate plan.



# Montenegro



**Montenegro has been cooperating with the EEA since 2002  
National Focal Point: Environment Protection Agency**

# Montenegro

## Context

Environmental protection in Montenegro is governed by the [2008 law on the environment](#),<sup>15</sup> which established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the main body in charge of implementing environmental law and policy. The law, which was [revised in 2016](#),<sup>16</sup> also introduced the requirement for official monitoring and reporting on the state of the environment on an annual basis, with an indicator-based report required every 4 years. The first annual report was published in 2010.

A national list of environmental indicators was adopted by the government in March 2013, and the first indicator-based report on the environment, based on 36 indicators, was produced the same year.

The EPA began cooperating with the EEA in 2009, and in 2011 it joined the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) and began official reporting and involvement in other EEA activities.

## Good practice and progress

Montenegro has made progress in adopting and gradually implementing EU environmental legislation over the last decade. It will now be required to accelerate its implementation of the national strategy for transposition,

implementation and enforcement of the EU acquis on environment and climate change, especially in the waste, water and nature protection sectors.

Air quality and air pollution is one example. The [2010 law on air protection](#)<sup>17</sup> was fleshed out by regulations on limiting emissions from stationary sources, on setting up a network of measuring points for monitoring and on types of pollutants, limit values and other air quality standards. All of these were fully in line with EU legislation.

In accordance with EU regulations, a [new regulation](#)<sup>18</sup> in 2011 banned the use of lead-based petrol. During the 2 years that followed, the country's first [national strategy on air quality management \(2013-2016\)](#)<sup>19</sup> was adopted. This was accompanied by a 54-point action plan and air quality plans for the three cities with the highest levels of PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations — Pljevlja, Nikšić and Podgorica — which were also adopted.

Efforts to create a national legal framework on climate change and to transpose recommendations from the EU's Water Framework Directive continued. This was also the case for the national strategy and plan on waste management and the process of updating Montenegro's national strategy on biodiversity, which establishes the goal of extending protected areas to cover 17 % of Montenegro's land and marine area.

The law on nature protection was updated at the end of 2016 to bring it fully in line

with the EU's Habitats and Birds Directives. Urgent measures are needed to preserve and improve the ecological value of protected areas and potential Natura 2000 sites, such as Ulcinj Salina, Lake Skadar, the Tara river and other river courses.

In terms of implementation, the government's [coastal area management plan](#)<sup>20</sup> for Montenegro, implemented through the involvement of local government from the country's coastal areas and the EPA in 2012, is seen as a significant success story. This is also the case for progress with vulnerability assessments. These are useful tools that allow decision-makers to analyse pollution in individual environmental segments to provide estimates of the overall vulnerability of a given area and that can help determine whether a specific area is suitable for a planned intervention or activity.

## Environmental challenges

Although air quality in urban areas and nationally — assessed in terms of concentrations of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) — remains within acceptable limits and varies little from year to year, Montenegro has experienced high concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less) that have often exceeded the daily concentrations permitted during the winter months, mainly because of the use of coal and wood as fuel.



Emissions of greenhouse gases decreased by nearly 50 % in 5 years, as a result of the economic crisis in the early 1990s, but by 1998 emissions had returned to 1990 levels, the baseline year. During the period 1998-2008, emissions grew once more because of increasing energy consumption in all sub-sectors, except industry. The global economic crisis from 2008 onwards caused a sharp new decline in industrial production and energy consumption, so much so that, by 2010, greenhouse gas emissions had dropped to a level that was 22 % below that of the baseline. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly urgent to start implementing the Paris Agreement by putting in place policies and measures, updating and

implementing the climate change adaptation and low emissions development strategy and starting to develop an integrated national energy and climate plan.

## Data

Montenegro has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2009. From 2000 to 2009, Serbia and Montenegro reported their data together as 'Serbia and Montenegro'. Figure 8 presents the data flows from Montenegro for the period 2005-2018, while Figure 9 presents the data flows, 2005-2018, showing the trend in data delivery.

Figure 8 Data flows from Montenegro, 2005-2018

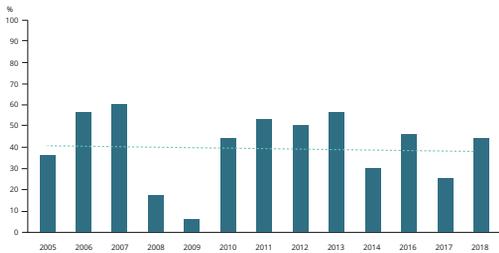
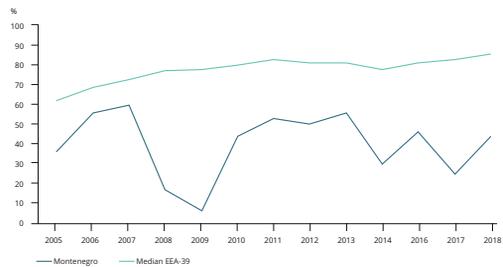


Figure 9 Data flows from Montenegro, 2005-2018, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)



## Future developments

As a country aiming to become a member of the EU, the aim of improving monitoring networks is fully aligned with Chapter 27 of the Montenegrin EU accession effort. Relevant institutions from the various environmental sectors are working on developing their capacity to produce reliable environmental data. This has been one of the goals of various Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) projects, such as those dedicated to improving the air quality monitoring network and the information technology (IT) infrastructure, to support the country's environmental information system. Others have concentrated on helping to establish monitoring systems in line with the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Water Framework Directive.

These developments are expected to improve Montenegro's ability to meet its environmental reporting obligations. In the coming period, efforts will concentrate on improving other relevant reporting areas and meeting the requirements for EEA membership in general.



# North Macedonia



**North Macedonia has been cooperating with the EEA  
since 2000  
National Focal Point: Ministry of Environment and  
Physical Planning**

# North Macedonia

## Context

North Macedonia became an official candidate to join the EU in 2005, and the long-term process of transposing EU legislation into North Macedonian law and harmonising environmental standards has been a government priority since then.

The law on the environment, which came into force in 2005 and was revised in 2018, provides the current basis for environmental policy and management in the country, as well as supplying the guiding principles and policy instruments for positive change. The last decade has seen the drafting and adoption of a host of laws, strategies and action plans covering most areas of environmental protection.

North Macedonia has used its active role in projects funded under the PHARE (Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy) and CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) programmes and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) to develop its national capacity for monitoring the environment.

## Good practice and progress

North Macedonia has made steady progress in harmonising its laws with the EU acquis over the last decade. The [2018 progress report](#)<sup>21</sup> by the European Commission reported on progress in further aligning

policies and legislation with the acquis, in the water, nature protection and waste sectors in particular. The environmental impact assessment process has improved but needs to improve further to ensure more effective public participation, in particular in the hydropower sector, mining and other infrastructure investments in national protected areas and potential Natura 2000 sites.

The [2012 national plan for the protection of ambient air quality](#)<sup>22</sup> for the period 2013-2018 contained measures for transport, energy, industry and agriculture aimed at reducing air pollution and improving air quality. The [programme for the gradual reduction of emissions of polluting substances at national level](#)<sup>23</sup> outlined measures for achieving reductions. A new national plan and a national air pollution control programme, in line with the EU's 2016 National Emissions Ceiling Directive, will be adopted during the IPA 2 technical project planned to start in 2019.

Specific policies were introduced to encourage changes in industry practice, such as establishing low-energy-intensive industries, using renewable energy in emission-intensive areas, and improving technologies, equipment and systems.

On water quality, laws and national strategies have been adopted on [water](#),<sup>24</sup> [water economies](#),<sup>25</sup> and the supply of drinking water and the collection of urban

wastewater.<sup>26</sup>

North Macedonia has been making progress with water quality. The EU's Water Framework Directive was transposed into the national law on water, which was adopted in 2008. Practical implementation began in 2011, and this was supplemented in 2012 by the national water strategy, which aims to promote the sustainable use of In general, emissions are decreasing because of the growing use of natural gas and imported electricity instead of coal and heavy fuel oil for generating energy, as well the closure of some major metal works. However, emissions caused by households are decreasing at a slower rate. In this case, wood, a major contributor to the emissions of particulates (total suspended particles, TSP; particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less, PM<sub>10</sub>; and particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less, PM<sub>2.5</sub>), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and carbon monoxide (CO), continues to be the main fuel.

Consumption of ozone (O3) depleting substances dropped sharply — by more than 99 % during the period 1996-2012 — meaning that North Macedonia has done more than meet its obligations under the Montreal Protocol. water over the next 30 years.

Seen as a whole, the degree of transposition of EU regulations relevant to water stands at 48 %. However, this percentage masks



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big differences between directives, which range from 100 % for the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and 97 % for the Drinking Water Directive to 11 % for the Bathing Water Directive and just 4 % for the QA/QC Directive.

North Macedonia has been a reliable partner of the EEA since cooperation began in 1998 and has been especially strong on providing data on air quality. It began supplying data on selected data flows to the EEA in 2015 and was the first country in the Western Balkans to implement the new e-reporting system on air quality, thereby joining the EEA's Europe-wide initiative for informing the general public about air quality — the European Air Quality Index, which was launched in November 2017. It has also been supportive of other countries in the

region's efforts to introduce the system.

The national air emission inventory, submitted in February 2019, provided a record of anthropogenic emissions of air pollutants for the entire period 1990-2017 and was produced in accordance with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) reporting guidelines.

In general, emissions are decreasing because of the growing use of natural gas and imported electricity instead of coal and heavy fuel oil for generating energy, as well as the closure of some major metal works. However, emissions caused by households are decreasing at a slower rate. In this case, wood, a major contributor to the emissions of particulates (total suspended particles, TSP; particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less, PM<sub>10</sub>; and particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less, PM<sub>2.5</sub>), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and carbon monoxide (CO), continues to be the main fuel.

Consumption of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) depleting substances dropped sharply — by more than 99 % during the period 1996-2012 — meaning that North Macedonia has done more than meet its obligations under the Montreal Protocol.

## Environmental challenges

Legislation has been adopted on consumer information on fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for new passenger cars.

The Third National Communication on Climate Change identified 40 installations for Emission Trading Scheme activities; however, more needs to be done to integrate climate change into other sectoral policies. It is becoming increasingly urgent to start implementing the Paris Agreement by putting in place policies and measures, updating and implementing the climate change adaptation and low emissions development strategy and starting to develop an integrated national energy and climate plan.

Fresh water is under pressure because of both human activity and the impact of climate change. The key consumers are agriculture 42 %, industry 29 %, households 24 % and energy production 2 %.

A key challenge will be to implement the adopted regional waste management plans and establish an integrated regional waste management system.

North Macedonia's commitments to reducing the emissions of the five main air pollutants (sulphur dioxide, SO<sub>2</sub>; nitrogen oxides, NO<sub>x</sub>; CO; PM<sub>2.5</sub>; and ammonia, NH<sub>3</sub>) for the years 2020 and 2030 under the EU's 2016 National Emissions Ceilings Directive have still not been set. The commitment for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is particularly important, as this is a critical substance for the country. These targets will form part of the national air pollution control programme under a planned IPA 2 technical project, which is due to start in 2019. A priority will be to implement air quality improvement measures by ensuring the efficient

coordination between central and local authorities and the allocation of sufficient financial resources.

North Macedonian law requires plans for managing the country’s river basins to be drawn up or revised every 6 years. However, as of November 2018, only a few plans — those for Lake Prespa and the Bregalnica and Strumica rivers — had been completed, and one for Lake Ohrid was being developed.

None of the plans developed so far have been adopted by the government. In addition, some have suffered from a lack of data due to the poor state of the water monitoring system.

## Data

North Macedonia has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2000. In 2018 the country achieved a 100% score on the delivery of Eionet core data flows (see figure 10).

## Future developments

With the path towards EU membership, future developments in North Macedonia are expected to reflect the continuing process of bringing national laws and policies on the environment into line with those of the EU and making sure that the country is technically ready to fulfil EU environmental criteria. It is hoped that implementing the EU environmental acquis will ensure an adequate level of environmental protection, resulting in healthy ecosystems and improved human well-being.

Figure 10 Data flows from Macedonia, 2005-2018

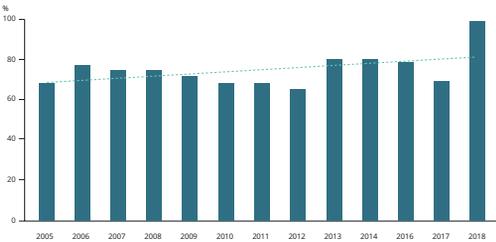
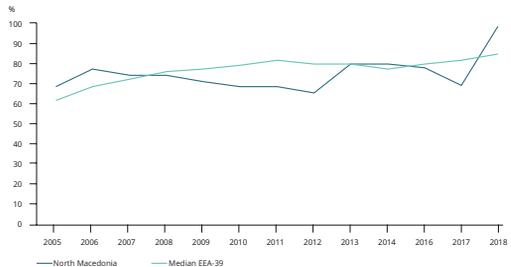


Figure 11 Data flows from Macedonia, 2005-2018, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)



# Serbia



**Serbia has been cooperating with the EEA since 2000  
National Focal Point: Serbian Environmental Protection  
Agency**

# Serbia

## Context

Environmental protection in Serbia is governed by the [law on environmental protection](#),<sup>27</sup> which was adopted in 2004. During that same year, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) was set up to establish and coordinate a network of national institutions for environmental monitoring and reporting at all levels. Every year, it publishes a report on the state of the environment to inform the decisions of policymakers and give the scientific community and the general public access to information on the environment. The report is based on indicators and applies the driver-pressure-state-impact-response (DPSIR) approach; the first edition of the report was published in 2006.

The annual report is accompanied by a series of thematic reports based on either in-house monitoring (air, water, pollen, soil) and data collection (emissions, waste) or collating information from other organisations (biodiversity, economic instruments, energy, forestry, industry, tourism and transport).

The quality of the information has increased over time by improving the amount and quality of data and revising indicators or creating new ones.

## Good practice and progress

Serbia has made good use of the Instrument

for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funding to improve the technical capacity of its national laboratory within SEPA. This has allowed the country to use analytical methods that are fully in line with EU standards, such as those of the Water Framework Directive. Over the past 3 years, SEPA has taken part in laboratory comparisons for gases and suspended particles (particulate matter with a diameter of 10 µm or less, PM<sub>10</sub>; particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less, PM<sub>2.5</sub>) organised by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Ispra, Italy. Since 2017, the Serbian government has provided additional funding on a regular



basis to allow SEPA to maintain its air quality monitoring system. This has permitted further progress, including increasing the number of measuring points for suspended particles (PM<sub>10</sub>) and adding benzo[a]pyrene, gravimetric measurements of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and ionic species in PM<sub>2.5</sub> to the list of pollutants monitored.

The National Register of Pollution Sources and the Cadastre of Contaminated Sites — with a comprehensive information system that collects data on air and water emissions and waste and soil via an online, self-registering, reporting portal — provide another positive example.

Serbia increased the scope of its efforts to monitor soil quality during the period 2010-2014, including carrying out a systematic assessment of chemical pollution in urban areas and industrial zones. In 2010, a [regulation](#)<sup>28</sup> was adopted to create a framework for compiling inventories of contaminated sites and more systematic monitoring.

As reported by SEPA, under a [2010 ordinance](#),<sup>29</sup> the number of protected species in Serbia has grown, reaching a total of 860 that are protected and 1 783 that are under strict protection.

More than 50 % of strictly protected species are listed within international conventions and EU directives. Forests cover around 32 % of Serbia's territory, indicating that the exploitation of forests remains within sustainable limits.

The first exercise in monitoring surface

water quality in Serbia in line with EU standards was conducted in 2012. In total, 498 surface water bodies were delineated. The monitoring programmes, performed by SEPA during the period 2012-2018, cover 44 % of these water bodies.

SEPA has improved the tracking of economic instruments and has increased the amount of data being monitored. There has been visible progress in terms of the revenues generated by environmental fees since 2010, while significant growth in subsidies and other incentives has also been recorded.

## Environmental challenges

Managing solid waste remains a challenge for Serbia. In total, 21 landfill sites were located less than 100 metres from watercourses, and five of these were sited almost on the banks of rivers. Closing and recultivating existing dumps and constructing 29 regional sanitary landfill sites — with centres dedicated to separating recyclable waste and transfer stations — is planned. Of these, 10 sanitary landfill sites have been built so far. During the period 2012-2015, the amount of generated and collected utility waste declined, and a slight increase in the scope of collection was observed. However, since 2015, the amount of solid waste has increased year on year, reaching 2.15 million tonnes or 0.30 tonnes per capita in 2017.

Serbia still lacks a national system for monitoring soil quality, although the latest assessments on 32 industrial contaminated sites showed that zinc, copper, chromium, arsenic and lead were the main pollutants.

The latest update of the Cadastre of Contaminated Sites managed by SEPA revealed the existence of 709 contaminated and potentially contaminated sites in Serbia, 557 of which are registered and 152 are estimated. A total of 41 sites are in the process of rehabilitation, and 52 sites have undergone rehabilitation and remediation, with aftercare measures now being applied. Public municipal waste disposal sites remain one of the main sources of local soil pollution.

In the period 2012-2016, 40 % of lake water bodies were characterised as having poor ecological status, while for reservoirs the water quality was somewhat higher (18 % moderate, 11 % poor and 9 % bad). In general, only 3 % of stream and river water bodies covered by the 2012-2016 monitoring programmes were found to have a good ecological status.

The air<sup>30</sup> in many Serbian towns and cities has been regularly found to contain concentrations of pollutants exceeding daily limit values. Levels of PM<sub>10</sub> in particular have been on the increase. Air quality plans for Belgrade and Pancevo have been adopted, and the Ministry for Environmental Protection has approved similar plans for Smederevo and Novi Sad. With the exception of Novi Sad — which in 2011 had high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) — air quality plans have been designed to tackle high levels of suspended particles (PM<sub>10</sub>); in the case of Belgrade, this refers to both PM<sub>10</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>. Since 2015, levels of NO<sub>2</sub> exceeding daily limit values have occurred only in Belgrade. Air quality in the Bor district significantly improved after new plants for copper

smelting and manufacturing sulphuric acid were built, but levels of SO<sub>2</sub> still cause poor air quality.

Only 7.5 % of Serbian territory lies within protected areas, a figure which fell far short of the target of 12 % set in 2010.<sup>31</sup> Between 1980 and 2006, the surface area of protected areas increased by an average of 13 000 hectares per year. During 2007 and 2008, only 1 083 hectares were given protected status, and, from 2008 to 2012, the area under protection actually decreased by around 20 000 hectares, because a more precise means of measurement was used.

The number of game animals decreased in Serbia by 10-15 % during the period 2009-2014. This is an important indicator as regards forest and grassland ecosystem stability. From a longer-term perspective, populations of game animals have not increased in the country, despite an increase of 75 % in the amount of forest areas over the last 50 years.

Serbia has set up and launched a national air quality e-reporting system with the assistance of the EEA. The support given to developing and implementing air quality e-reporting in the Western Balkans project provided technical solutions and allowed staff to be trained and begin regular reporting in line with air quality IPR provisions to the EEA on three data flows — D, E1a and E2a.

The circular economy is new to Serbia. Although many challenges remain with regard to introducing this concept in Serbia, efforts have begun to overcome them.

Serbia's Chamber of Commerce and Industry set up the Centre for Circular Economy in 2017 and the Ministry of Environmental Protection formed an organisational unit, the Circular Economy Group, in 2018.

Overall, Serbia will need to intensify the implementation and enforcement of its work on environmental protection, such as closing non-compliant landfill sites, investing in waste reduction, separation and recycling, reinforcing air quality monitoring, advancing river basin management and preparing for Natura 2000.

Figure 12 Data flows from Serbia, 2005-2018

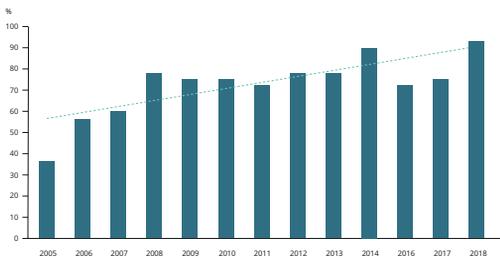
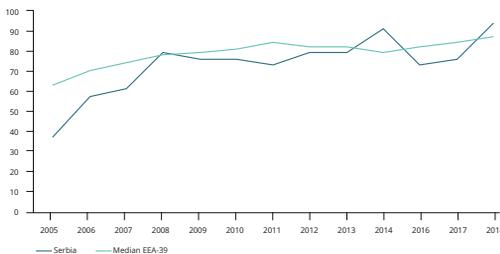


Figure 13 Data flows from Serbia, 2005-2018, showing the trend in data delivery



Source: Eionet core data flows  
 (<https://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>)

## Data

Serbia has been providing the EEA with data on the environment since 2004.

## Future developments

Continuing to improve Serbia's technical and human capacity to do its work on monitoring and protecting the environment, as defined by national law as part of the EU accession process, is one of the main strategic objectives. In the near future, this will consist of expanding the monitoring of air quality and water quality under the Water Framework Directive as well as extending structures for soil monitoring to cover the whole country. Efforts will also be made to improve participation in EEA/Eionet activities, to extend reporting to cover new areas by providing core data flows on noise, bathing water and greenhouse gases, and to take a more proactive approach to new thematic areas, such as sustainable transitions, global megatrends and the circular economy.

It is becoming increasingly urgent to start implementing the Paris Agreement by putting in place policies and measures, updating and implementing the climate change adaptation and low emissions development strategy and starting to develop an integrated national energy and climate plan.



# The way forward...

## for the Western Balkans and the EEA

Reflecting on the history of cooperation between the EEA and the Western Balkan partners, there has been steady progress and strong commitment towards full integration into the EEA and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet).

The countries were fully incorporated in the 5-year report The European environment — state and outlook in 2015, with the intention of further developing high-level input from the Western Balkans in the upcoming report in 2020. The countries' efforts are acknowledged through their status as cooperating countries and their full participation in all Eionet meetings.

The Western Balkans have no formal reporting obligations towards the EEA and cooperate on a voluntary basis. Their existing cooperation with the EEA — and the involvement that they have had in the priority data flows for a number of years — will equip them for the formal reporting obligations later on in the EU accession process. To this end, a large number of capacity-building exercises have been

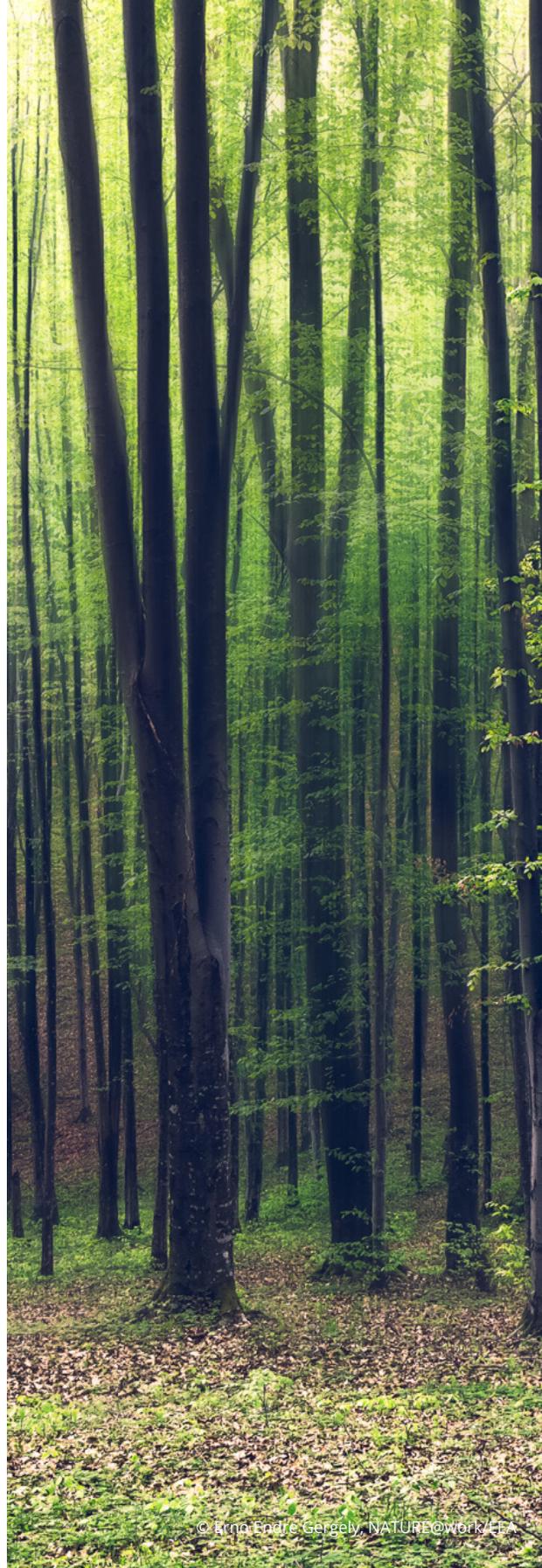
undertaken by the EEA and its experts in the network, which are beneficial to both EU and Western Balkan partners.

In the design of the new EEA/Eionet strategy beyond 2020, cooperation with Western Balkan partners is one of the strongly embedded elements bringing additional value to the network and EEA activities across the board. While membership of the EEA is a political process that the Agency does not influence directly, the focus of the joint work is on technical readiness and further developing the network already in place.

The provision of environmental information through a well-established process in which the EEA and the EU have been investing for years is of value to policymakers in the Western Balkan region and beyond. Supporting further continuation of the efforts already made is crucial for further integrating the Western Balkans into the larger EU family and beneficial to all citizens. The EEA looks forward to enhanced cooperation with its Western Balkan partners in the years to come.

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## Western Balkan Countries

### Key developments, achievements and the way ahead in the cooperation with the EEA

This publication is a short overview of the key developments in and achievements of the Western Balkan countries' cooperation with the EEA over the past 20 years and a glimpse of the way ahead as the Agency and Eionet celebrate their 25th anniversary. It gives our partners in the Western Balkans the opportunity to describe developments from their perspective.

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