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Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

Making public administration fit to facilitate a green transition

EU4Environment Regional Assembly, 13-14 March 2024

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Setting the scene

- **Well-functioning environmental administration** is a key for the government to deliver on its priorities and ensure a transition to a green economy.
- **No single approach** and **no ideal institutional set up**
- EaP countries launched **ambitious comprehensive reforms** to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation
- Efforts are translated into **modernized policies, legislation and operations...**
- ...and **strengthening capacity of environmental administration and co-operation with sectoral administration**
- **Several drivers:** international commitments, COVID-19 impacts, push to make the administration more efficient, process of approximation with EU and opening accession negotiations
- A number of **good developments recorded but several challenges remain...**

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Greening public administration at all levels: general trends

- **Stronger Environmental Ministries** that develop policies and environment/green economy legislation working with an increasingly engaged **Ministries of Economy**
- Increased engagement and cooperation with other **sectoral Ministries and their subordinated agencies** (e.g. SME Development Agencies)
- **Examples of dedicated structures/units** in place within the sectoral Ministries to deal with green economy
- **Administration of the President** often plays an important role in the green agenda (e.g. National Afforestation Programme 2023-32 in Moldova, to plant 100 000 hectares of forest)
- **Co-ordination among government agencies** is improving
- **Regional/municipal levels** are progressively engaged (with help of the EU)

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Greening public administration at all levels: general trends

- **Examples of green capacity building programmes for sectoral Ministries** but still an important role played by **donors**
- **Public participation** has expanded and improved
- **Role of research institutes and universities increasing** in green analysis and education

- **Certain stability** in the governments' operations
- **E-government:** key ministries are adopting e-government models
- **Financial incentives:** increase in salaries for civil servants

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To get inspired... Country-tailored examples

- **High-level policy dialogue on green economy in Armenia:** **GREEN Armenia platform**, launched in 2022, is instrumental in streamlining policy, investment initiatives & ensuring an efficient coordination for **green economy transition** in Armenia.
- Chaired by Deputy Prime Minister, it brings together representatives of state institutions, private sector, scientific institutions and development partners.
- The Government's Action Plan 2021-26 foresees environmental protection as a priority (e.g. green energy, alternative vehicles & related infrastructure, afforestation).

Its 4th meeting
was dedicated to
water sector
(March 2024)

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- **Facilitating & digitalising public services in Azerbaijan:**
The Azerbaijani Service & Assessment Network, or “ASAN” (meaning “easy”) is a one-stop shop for public services, including by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. In 2015, ASAN won the UN Public Service Awards. To bring public services to rural areas, **mobile ASAN** offices travel to remote areas via ten well-equipped buses & a train.
- Transition to e-government opens multiple opportunities to enhance environmental protection. E-Government Portal (www.e-gov.az/en) offers 443 public e-services, including by the MENR.

468 tons of paper
& **7 962 trees** are
saved through e-
government in
Azerbaijan

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- **Institutionalising environmental education in Georgia:**
Since its establishment in 2013 under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (on the basis of the Aarhus Centre), the **Environmental Information and Education Centre** has been playing a core role in promoting environmental education & ensuring access to environmental information.
- In 2022, the Centre won the "VET Excellence Award", which rewards best practices to become fit for the green economy.

Level of environmental education in Georgia

55 % of the respondents did not receive environmental education at the level of university, **61%** at the level of technical education, **65%** at the level of informal education. (2022, ISSA, EIEC, UNDP)

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- **9 years of inter-ministerial coordination on a green economy in Moldova:** The Inter-ministerial **Working Group for the Promotion of Sustainable Development and the Green Economy** set up in 2015, has proved to be an effective platform for co-ordination of the green economy.
- In July 2023, it was reorganised to co-ordinate the provisions on the **green and circular economy** of the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030”, with greater focus on the EU Green Deal and the Moldova-EU Association Agenda 2021-27.

The Group is meeting
twice a year
(February &
September)

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- **Institutional approach to boost reforms in Ukraine:** Under public administration reform, structures called **Reform Support Teams (RSTs)** are placed in a number of ministries, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources. Their main advantages - expertise (Ukrainian professionals), financial independence from the ministry (not ministry employees), & not being overburdened with everyday activities. Their main role is helping with pipelines of **reforms and strategic thinking**.
- In the current challenging situation, with the MEPNR facing an important understaffing, the RSTs support has become even more precious for the Ministry to back up everyday activities.

In 2024, the RST in the MEPNR is being complemented by an **expert on EU integration** to accompany the Ministry in the EU accession process

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Greening public administration at all levels: selected remaining challenges

- Sectoral Ministries and subordinate institutions need **clearer and stronger mandates and more explicit responsibilities** for green economy (and better understanding)
- Need for a **wider use of dedicated inter-ministerial bodies** on a green economy, **working groups and task forces** on priority elements
- **Capacity needs assessment** and **dedicated and continuous training programmes** (channel donor capacity development to domestic training institutions)
- More **awareness raising and green economy promotion** by sectoral Ministries
- Capacity at **regional and municipal levels** remain a weak point
- Need for greater **engagement of Environmental Citizens Organisations** in awareness raising and capacity building
- Stronger **universities' engagement** in green education and awareness raising

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Greening public administration at all levels: Reactions from the EaP country representatives

- Success story in your country
- Remaining challenges

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Building capacity within environmental authorities: general trends

- **Stronger Environmental Ministries:** e.g. restoration of the Ministry of Environment in Moldova and in Ukraine as separate Ministries; upgrade of the Ministry of Natural Resources to the Ministry of Environment in Armenia
- **Structural optimisation** and reinforcement of capacity **to deal with green economy** (e.g. creation of the Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development Subdivision in MENR in Azerbaijan; Department of Environment and Climate Change in charge of green aspects in MEPA in Georgia; nomination in Jan 2024 of the state secretary responsible the green economy in Moldova & new structural unit - Section on the Circular Economy and Economic Instruments).
- Reinforcement of Ministries' capacity **in light of the EU accession process** (e.g. in Moldova staff units of the ministry was increased from 62 to 96 persons (three times more than in 2021); new management position of the deputy general secretary to assist the minister with accession requirements; creation of Division on public policies co-ordination and European Integration; new RST expert on EU integration in the MEPNR in Ukraine)
- Efforts made to increase **attractiveness of environmental administration**, notably salaries (up to nearly 30% in Azerbaijan in 2019, in all government bodies, including the MENR; significant increase in Moldova, as of 1 June 2023 to MDL 15 330-17 010 for a consultant and MDL 20 100-28 710 for a head of section/division)

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Building capacity within environmental authorities: general trends

- Optimisation of **subordinate institutions** (e.g. National Office for the Implementation of Projects in the Field of the Environment in Moldova)
- **New agencies in support of better environmental policy making**, such as Environmental Agencies or specialized agencies (e.g. creation of the new Geology Agency in Azerbaijan in 2023)
- Reinforcing **environmental compliance and enforcement** (e.g. subordination of the inspection body - Environmental Protection and Mining Inspection Body - directly to the Government in Armenia; creation of the State Environmental Security Service in Azerbaijan; reform of the Inspectorate for Environmental Protection initiated in Sept 2023 in Moldova), closer cooperation with int. networks (e.g. IMPEL)
- Improved management of existing or new **environmental funds** and extending funding opportunities (first-ever environmental project in Moldova in the LIFE programme, approved in Oct 2023)
- **Extended training opportunities** (over 6 000 trained with EU4Environment)

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Building capacity within environmental authorities: remaining or new challenges

- **Low appeal** of environmental administration, including for the **younger generation** (in Azerbaijan, civil service statistics show most staff (56%) leave before completing ten years of service; only one-sixth (15.8%) of civil servants younger than 30 years)
- **Understaffing** and high staff **turnover** (particularly visible in Moldova: up to 45% vacancies; about ¼ left the Ministry in 2022)
- Lack of institutional memory, low knowledge retention & pressure on existing staff
- Finding **suitable staff** is a serious issue; hiring people with minimum knowledge is a concern
- **Unbalanced workload** may push away knowledgeable experts from public administration (1-2 experts with solid expertise perform most of the tasks)
- **Knowledge gaps and practical skills** needed for implementing green economy, coupled with the complex requirements for the EU approximation. Insufficient capacity for **data-driven** policy making
- **Increased workloads** for the EU accession process (e.g. 4 staff units in the section responsible for a green economy in Moldova)

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Building capacity within environmental authorities: remaining or new challenges

- **Performance assessment** is more a formality than a meaningful assessment
- Lack of **centralised approach** for green agenda & **insufficient co-ordination** among departments
- Some concerns about decreasing **weight of the environment** in the merged Ministries (e.g. MEPA in Georgia). The challenge to precisely estimate the budget and number of staff working for the environmental pillar of the Ministry.
- Insufficient **financial resources** and challenges to public environmental expenditure management (revenues and spending); relies on external grants
- **Subordinate institutions** often face similar issues as the sectoral Ministries and are often not effectively utilised
- **External factors** (Russian war of aggression against Ukraine)
- Technical issues (office space and equipment)

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Building capacity within environmental authorities: Reactions from the EaP country representatives

- What are the most tangible improvements within your Ministry?
- What are the main challenges the Ministry of Environment faces in your country?

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Ways of strengthening countries' administrative capacity

- Continue **improving attractiveness of environmental administration** (salaries, training programmes, international study tours, stages, participation in international meetings)
- **Review the institutional arrangements under the Environment Ministry** in the context of supporting greening the economy
- Continue establishing **green economy focal points** in sectoral Ministries
- Create (if not in place) inter-ministerial **co-ordination mechanism for green economy and specific priority issues** (working groups, task forces)
- Continue seizing **digital opportunities** in public administration

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Ways of strengthening countries' administrative capacity

- Carry **capacity needs assessments and develop action plans** for strengthening capacity for a green economy
- Develop a **self-assessment and monitoring tool** for administrative capacity in the Environment and other Ministries
- Channel **technical support** from donors and international partners to domestic training programmes to build capacity at national and subnational levels (to build curricula)
- Provide support to **regional and local authorities** (budgets and knowledge)
- Continue enhancing participation of **civil society and universities**

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Country-tailored recommendations into forthcoming reports

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Strengthening administrative capacity for green transition in **Azerbaijan**

State of play and reflections on possible improvements



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Strengthening administrative capacity for green transition in **Moldova**

State of play and reflections on possible improvements



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Strengthening administrative capacity for green transition in **Georgia**

State of play and reflections on possible improvements



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