

Preface

This third Environmental Performance Review of the Czech Republic shows that despite having relatively few natural resources and growth above the OECD average, the Czech Republic has managed to decouple many environmental pressures from its economic growth and improve environmental infrastructure.

The country renewed its commitment to sustainable development by adopting a whole-of-government approach to define priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Relative to the OECD average, the Czech Republic performs well on Sustainable Development Goals related to poverty, water and biodiversity. Protected areas covered 22% of the territory in 2016, above the Aichi target of 17% for 2020. However, the country's strong industrial base and its reliance on coal place it among the most energy- and carbon-intensive economies in the OECD and air pollution is a serious health concern.

Strengthening political commitment to a low-carbon economy and aligning the State Energy Policy with the Paris Agreement objectives are key priorities. Nuclear power has been gradually replacing coal in the electricity mix. The Czech Republic surpassed its Kyoto target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 8% over 2008-12, achieving a 30% reduction below 1990 levels. It seems on track to reach its 2020 objectives. However, achieving mid- and long-term targets will require further progress, in particular on carbon pricing.

The review looks in detail at waste management, the circular economy and sustainable urban development. The Czech Republic has made progress in waste recovery but landfilling remains the main treatment method, partly due to inadequate price signals. Current plans and programmes on waste management and prevention, secondary raw materials, eco-innovation and cleaner production should help in moving forward. Promptly adopting the pending new Waste Act will help provide better incentives to exploit the raw material potential of waste.

The Czech Republic has experienced a process of suburbanisation. In Prague's outer zone, built-up areas are growing and car traffic volume is increasing, exacerbating air and noise pollution. The review identifies several measures that could help make urbanisation more sustainable. These include strengthening the urban governance system, adopting compact-city policies, reviewing the land use planning system, promoting the development of brownfield sites and continuing to promote Local Agenda 21, a voluntary tool for sustainable development at the local level.

This review is the result of a constructive policy dialogue between the Czech Republic and the other members and observers of the OECD Working Party on Environmental Performance. It provides 46 recommendations to help the country green its economy and improve its environmental governance and management.

I am confident that this collaborative effort will support progress in achieving national and international environmental commitments and promote better environmental policies for better lives in and beyond the Czech Republic.



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