

Preface

France's environmental policy is proactive and ambitious, as exemplified in 2015 by the passage of the Energy Transition for Green Growth Act and the adoption of the Paris Agreement by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21). The OECD has worked tirelessly to support this agreement and will continue to back international efforts to fight climate change. Against a domestic backdrop of low economic growth over the last decade, France has made progress in decoupling by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) and the main atmospheric pollutants, curtailing freshwater abstraction and stabilising the generation of municipal waste. Nevertheless, intensive farming, urbanisation, land take and expanding transport infrastructure continue to have a negative impact on water and air pollution and on ecosystems. It is therefore vital to develop green activities to underpin growth while maintaining a focus on environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources.

This third *Environmental Performance Review* of France examines the progress made in achieving the country's environmental objectives since the OECD's previous review, published in 2005. It presents 33 recommendations to make the economy greener and to improve environmental governance and management. Recent advances in French environmental policy include the incorporation of a carbon component into fossil fuel taxation. France also contributed to the launch of the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition at the COP21. However, there is still room for further green tax reform, which would help ease the tax burden on labour and businesses. A more modern approach to territorial organisation and simplified rules and regulations are other positive developments which should be pursued.

The *Environmental Performance Review* pays special attention to France's energy transition. The Energy Transition for Green Growth Act sets ambitious GHG emission reduction targets for a country which already has one of the lowest-carbon economies in the OECD. Further efforts will be required to step up the deployment of renewable energies and manage energy demand in the building and transport sectors, especially in the short term so as to avoid any misplaced dilution of efforts linked to the fall in fossil fuel prices. The new strategic framework created by the Act will help clarify the timetable and methods for greening the energy mix while optimising the costs involved.

In Europe and overseas, France has an extremely rich natural heritage. It is also one of the ten countries in the world with the greatest number of endangered species, giving France great responsibility where biodiversity is concerned. Between now and 2030, the trend scenario is one of a decline in ordinary biodiversity and an increase in generalist species, which are the only ones that can resist increasing land take. The *Review* is in favour of ongoing legislative changes designed to rationalise biodiversity governance and strengthen instruments for incorporating biodiversity into planning policies. It also

recommends redirecting public subsidies towards behaviour supporting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and promoting agro-ecology.

This report is the result of a constructive dialogue between France and the other countries participating in the OECD Working Party on Environmental Performance. The examples from France are highly instructive for any countries wishing to promote green growth. I am convinced that this collaboration will be useful in overcoming the many common challenges facing the other OECD Member countries and partners.



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