

The OSCE's activities aimed at preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes and lessons learned from these activities

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has a comprehensive approach to security. Preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes are important elements to this approach within its Economic and Environmental Dimension.

The OSCE's work in this area contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular towards reaching

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on Good Health and Well-Being, which aims to “substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination”;
- SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation, which aims at “minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials”; and
- SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, which aims “to achieve, by 2020, the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle... and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil”.

Mandate

The OSCE mandate in this area dates back to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, the Organization's founding document, where different aspects of waste management are mentioned under several fields for co-operation agreed by the OSCE participating States. Numerous subsequent documents and decisions confirmed and further detailed the OSCE mandate within this sphere.

The Vienna Document from 1989 specifically refers to hazardous chemicals, wastes and substances several times; in particular, OSCE participating States agreed to

- “protect and improve freshwater resources and to reduce significantly the pollution of seas and coastal areas, transboundary watercourses and international lakes from all sources of pollution”;
- “reduce significantly discharges of toxic, persistent and potentially hazardous substances”;
- “recognize the need to improve international co-operation on transboundary movement of hazardous wastes”;
- “encourage the elaboration of international agreements, including a global convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes”;
- “seek closer co-operation and greater exchange of information on problems associated with potentially hazardous chemicals including assessment of the risks to health and the environment.”

With the Bonn Document of 1990, the participating States considered “that among the areas for co-operation are pollution monitoring, major technological hazard and accident prevention, assessment of chemicals, treatment and disposal of toxic and dangerous waste, ...”

With the Helsinki Document of 1992, the participating States specifically referred to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. The participating States agreed to “ascertain that their military establishments conform to their nationally applicable environmental norms in the treatment and disposal of hazardous wastes” and expressed concern about the illegal international transport and disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes.

The need for assistance in addressing risks of illegal trafficking in hazardous wastes was further recognized in the 2005 OSCE Border Security and Management Concept and MC Decision No. 11/06: Future Transport Dialogue in the OSCE.

Ministerial Council Decision 6/07 on Protecting Critical Energy Infrastructure from Terrorist Attack recognised that hazardous waste storage facilities belong to critical infrastructure that can be vulnerable to terrorist attack.

OSCE projects and activities aimed at preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes

The respective OSCE political commitments recognize that mismanagement of hazardous wastes, chemicals and substances can affect stability and security of countries and can cause tensions between countries. The broad mandate described above has enabled the OSCE over the years to address related challenges in different parts of the OSCE region. These have been implemented through a variety of projects and activities including the following:

Building capacity to prevent illegal transboundary movement of hazardous wastes

From 2008 to 2015, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) implemented several projects in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine) to help strengthen national capacities to prevent illegal transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. In some training events related to these projects participants from the countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia were eligible to participate.

The following key results have been achieved:

More than 300 customs and border guard officers as well as staff members of environmental authorities have been trained since 2008.

A group of trainers set up with support from the OSCE have delivered several training events with focus on prevention of illegal trafficking in hazardous wastes at national and regional level. Following project completion, some trainers have continued to train staff of authorities in the Eastern Europe region, in particular at a customs training facility of the Department of Specialized Training and Canine Support of the Ukrainian Fiscal Service in the city of Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine (<http://sfs.gov.ua/en/about-sfs/structure/specialized-department/>). As a result of the OSCE's previous support, the training facility's curriculum now includes training activities related to illegal trafficking of hazardous wastes and some other transboundary environmental crimes.

A computer-based interactive (e-learning) course on detection and prevention of environmental crimes at the border has been developed - in Russian - and distributed to competent authorities and relevant organizations in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. The course covers not only theoretical and practical aspects of the Basel Convention. It also addresses illegal trafficking of ozone-depleting substances (the Montreal Protocol), illegal pesticides and endangered species of animals and plants (CITES Convention). Many of OSCE-supported training materials have been developed (in Russian) and widely distributed among relevant authorities in Eastern Europe as well as in South Caucasus and Central Asia. These training materials are also available on the OSCE's web-site (<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/hazardous-waste-management>). As part of these training materials, the OSCE has supported a publication entitled *Counteraction to Counterfeit and Contraband Pesticides. Methodology (2015)*. It explains the underlying reasons for the circulation of counterfeit pesticides and illegal trafficking of pesticides as well as the regional trends in this context. The methodology for counteracting this type of crime is based on an approach comprising prevention, preparation and response to already committed crime.

Given the focus of its activities in this area, the OSCE has closely co-operated with the Secretariat of the Basel Convention as well as with Interpol. Other stakeholders the OSCE has been co-operating with include Europol, the World Customs Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Secretariat of the Montreal Protocol, Green Customs Initiative, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM, UNEP, UNDP and the private sector.

Elimination of mélange

The OSCE supports its participating States in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia in the elimination of the toxic legacy of the so called “mélange”.

Mélange (otherwise called IRFNA – inhibited red fuming nitric acid) is a toxic, volatile, and combustible chemical substance. It was extensively used in the Warsaw Pact countries during the Cold War, as a liquid rocket fuel component

for missiles. Many of these countries inherited large quantities of mélange, which was often stored in old and deteriorating storage facilities, posing a risk to human health and the environment.

Since 2003, the OSCE has been supporting countries in eliminating mélange – either by neutralizing it, or by safely transferring it to specialized chemical facilities where it can be safely converted to industrial products. A total of seven participating States¹ were able to get rid of this toxic legacy with the support of the OSCE. In Belarus, the removal of highly toxic rocket fuel components was completed just recently, in June 2018, with the help of the OSCE.

At different stages in this process, the OCEEA has contributed its technical expertise. The process involved efforts of several OSCE executive structures, mainly the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and several OSCE Field Operations). More information can be found at <https://www.osce.org/fsc/120274>

Assistance for disposal of outdated pesticides in Transdniestria

In Transdniestria/the Republic of Moldova, considerable stocks of outdated (obsolete) pesticides that are inappropriately stored pose a threat to human health and the environment. Obsolete pesticides are toxic substances and persistent organic pollutants.

In the framework of the **Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC Initiative)**², the OSCE has facilitated a dialogue to address this hazardous waste legacy in Transdniestria. These efforts resulted in funding for an initial project, which made it possible for the OSCE Mission to Moldova, supported by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), to implement the removal of 105 tonnes of outdated pesticides in

¹ Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro and Ukraine

² The ENVSEC Initiative was founded in 2003 to address the linkages between the environment and security. It is a partnership of five international organizations – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).

2012-2014. These were stored in decrepit storage facilities in the district of Ribnitsa.

These stockpiles were tested, repackaged, transported in line with the Basel Convention, and safely disposed of at state-of-the-art chemical facilities in a EU country. More outdated pesticides remain in the region, and efforts to address this legacy will likely continue in the future.

This initial project has contributed to increase dialogue, practical co-operation and confidence-building in the context of the Transdnestrian Settlement process. This project has contributed to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention. It aims, among other, to eliminate stockpiles of persistent organic pollutants, many of which are pesticides.

Hazardous waste management in South Caucasus countries

In the South Caucasus, OSCE activities in hazardous waste management focus on abandoned industrial legacy sites. National stakeholders from the region consider such sites as areas of concern for environmental security. Hazardous waste accumulated in abandoned industrial complexes is stored in containment facilities, many of which are derelict due to lack or absence of maintenance.

In many cases, such sites are in close vicinity to populated areas or rivers, creating additional risks for exposure to dangerous substances. Cascading impacts that could be triggered by natural hazards at those sites are an additional source of concern for countries.

To assist participating States in addressing this challenge the OSCE has carried out several activities in the region, particularly in Armenia and Georgia. The OSCE has been assisting in mapping hazardous waste hot spots, assessing the potential risks and developing practical recommendations for risk reduction.

In Georgia, a team of experts composed of national and international consultants, evaluated the likelihood and the magnitude of risks for selected hazardous waste sites. Experts elaborated recommendations for risk reduction and proposed a mixture of structural and non-structural measures to be

implemented by local or national authorities. The project also delivered a GIS-compatible database incorporating geographic, environmental and chemical-related characteristics of selected sites. Similar activities have been conducted in Armenia in 2017.

The OSCE's contribution towards international efforts to fight environmental crime

Given the OSCE's experience and long-term engagement in the area of preventing illegal trafficking in hazardous wastes, the OSCE also contributes to partner organization's efforts towards fighting environmental crime.

Environmental crime (in particular illegal trafficking in hazardous wastes and protected wildlife species) has been identified as a priority for the EU Policy Cycle for Organized and Serious International Crime for the period 2018 – 2021. The OSCE has contributed to the planning of the respective Multi-Annual Strategic Plan including through an active dialogue with respective authorities of France, which holds the role of the driver for the environmental crime priority in the EU Policy Cycle. The OSCE provided opportunities for France as the driver and Slovakia as the co-driver to address the OSCE participating States about the environmental crime priority at the Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (Slovakia, October 2017) and the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee meeting (France, December 2017).

Lessons learnt

For the OSCE, as the world's largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII under the United Nations Charter, an important lesson learnt from the above projects on preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes is that cooperation in this area can be used to develop and facilitate dialogue, practical co-operation and confidence-building. Sharing information on the identification of locations with hazardous chemicals and wastes, the risks associated with these locations and of best practices in

removal and elimination of such substances has been used as a means to facilitate cooperation and build good neighborly relations.

Cooperation with national institutions, NGOs and community organizations has been essential to the success and sustainability of many of the OSCE's projects and activities in the area of preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes. At the same time this cooperation has enabled the OSCE to help strengthening national capacities of relevant participating States.

It is essential that sustainability of achieved project results be paid sufficient attention at each stage of the project. One of the ways to do this is to help create capacities (e.g. trainers, training curricula and material). These should be available beyond project completion and should assist national authorities in internalizing relevant elements within its training establishments. This the case with the Ukrainian Fiscal Service's curricula. Staff members of the Fiscal Service who have gone through OSCE-supported training-of-trainers continue to train their staff beyond project completion.

Close cooperation with other international organizations, including through the ENVSEC Initiative, has also been essential for the success of many activities. This is due to the complex challenges posed by hazardous substances and the technical expertise that is often required to address these challenges.

Last not least: The problems and challenges related to hazardous wastes, chemicals and substances have in most cases not been created by those living closest to the areas contaminated. Local stakeholders as well as governments are often not able to solve the problems associated with hazardous wastes and chemicals and require international financial and technical assistance.