

Countries and regions

Portugal



Over the last couple of decades, Portugal has made significant developments in environmental protection and quality of life improvement. Currently is developing a Commitment for Green Growth which aims to decouple economic growth from resource use, promote energy efficiency and the identification of new growth opportunities.

Main themes and sectors addressed in the national State of Environment report

The Portuguese State of the Environment Report (Relatório do Estado do Ambiente – REA or, in English, PT-SOER^[1]) is published annually in compliance with the National Framework Environment Law^[2]. The report assesses and discloses the country's environmental performance. The last report was published in December 2014 by the Portuguese Environment Agency (APA).

The PT-SOER 2014 considers 32 indicators covering seven thematic areas: Environment and Economy, Energy and Transport, Air and Climate, Water, Soil and Biodiversity, Waste, and Environmental Risks. The selected set of indicators used data provided by APA, as well as by many other national organisations.

The report describes the Portuguese social and macroeconomic framework, and makes a brief analysis of the relationship between recent trends in the Portuguese economy and some environmental variables. The PT-SOER 2014 also included, for the second time in its history, two quantified scenarios for possible evolutions of the Portuguese economy until 2050. As an innovation, the report comprised a chapter which explored the potential impacts for the country's environment of two of the Megatrends identified by the EEA in 2010 (and now updated): "Intensified global competition for resources" and "Increasingly severe consequences of climate change".

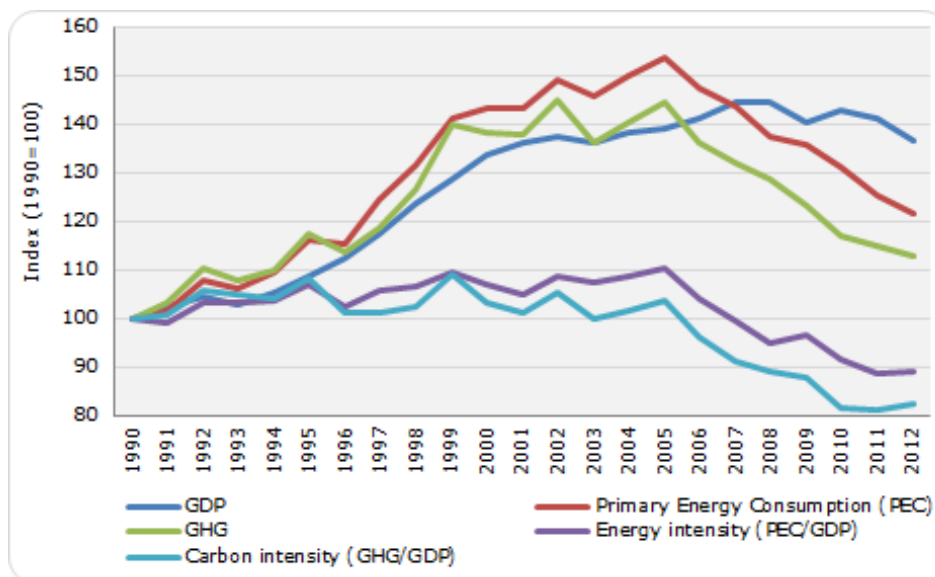
Key findings of the State of Environment report


Portugal has made significant advances in environmental protection and quality-of-life across several thematic areas. Among the indicators assessed, the water domain stands out with a very high level of performance in 2013. 98.2% of **drinking water** complies with health standards, while almost 100% of **bathing water** is safe.

Also standing out is Portugal's climate and (renewable) energy performance. In 2012, total Portuguese **GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions** (excluding those caused by land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)) were estimated at about 68,8 Mt CO₂ equivalent, representing an increase of 13,1% compared to 1990 levels, well below the EU burden-sharing agreement under which Portugal is bound to limit its annual emissions in the first commitment period (2008-2012) until 27% above 1990 levels. Furthermore, a review of all GHG emissions in Europe shows that in 2012 Portugal had one of the lowest per-capita levels among the EU-28, ranking sixth, with a value of 6,5 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per inhabitant. The European average was 9 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per inhabitant.

The **energy intensity of the economy** has been decreasing since 2005. In 2012, Portuguese energy intensity was 146,5 kg of oil equivalent per 1 000 EUR, while the EU-28 average was 143,2 kg of oil equivalent per 1 000 EUR. Regarding the **carbon intensity of the economy**, the turning point for a decreasing trend occurred earlier (from 2000), and is related to the increased share of renewables in primary energy consumption in the same period.

Figure 1. Relationship between GDP, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions



Source:  Portuguese State of the Environment Report, 2013

In 2012, Portugal was the fourth country in the EU with the highest incorporation of renewable energy for electricity production. This year, the share of **renewable energy** sources in gross final energy consumption was 24,6%. The Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC endorses a mandatory target of a 20% share of energy from renewable sources in overall community energy consumption by 2020. In Portugal, the target set is 31% of gross final energy consumption and 10% of energy in the transport sector by 2020. The share of renewable energy sources in gross electricity consumption for the fulfilment of EU obligations was 35,1% in 2012.

Regarding the **waste** sector, in 2013 the total production of municipal waste in mainland Portugal (4 362 million tons) decreased by about 4% compared to the previous year, from 454 kg per capita in 2012 to 438 kg per capita in 2013. This was below the EU-28 average for 2012 of 492 kg per capita per year. The percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill remains high (43%). Of the remaining municipal waste, 22% goes to energy recovery, 17% to mechanical and biological treatment, 9% to material recovery, 7% to mechanical treatment and 2% to organic recovery.

In mainland Portugal, the total area under **organic agriculture** increased from 0,2% to 6,1% between 1994 and 2012, reaching a share greater than the 2011 EU-27 average of 5,5%.

The **protected areas** of Portugal, classified under the National Network of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 represented 22% of mainland Portugal in 2013.

In 2013, **air quality** recorded a significant number of days rated "Good" and "Very Good", and a reduction in the number of days rated "Poor" and "Bad". However, the number of episodes of **tropospheric ozone pollution** and of **fine particles pollution** were higher than the long-term target established.

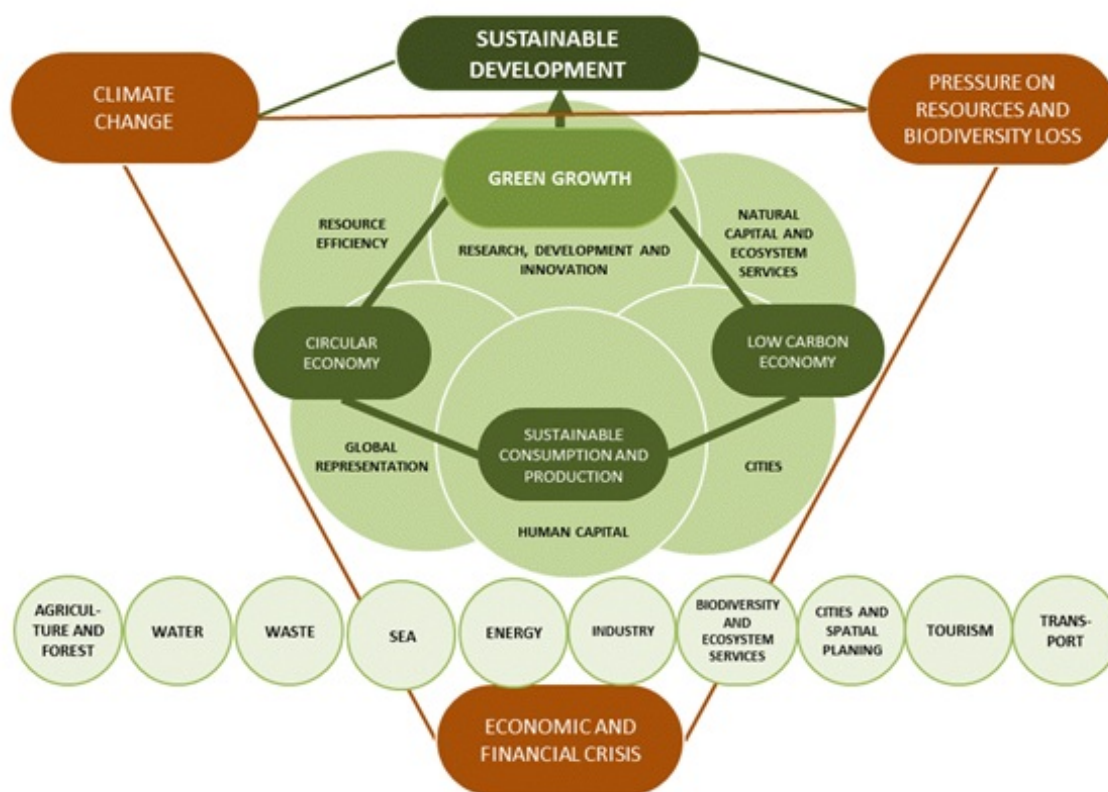
There are a few areas that need special attention to reverse negative trends. **Energy dependence** is among them, Portugal imported 71,5% of its energy needs in 2013, which is nonetheless the lowest value in 2 decades. The **transportation** sector, where energy consumption remains excessive also demands attention. Another area of concern is **forest fires** in mainland Portugal. In 2013, there were 152 756 hectares of burnt area, an increase of 38,6% compared to 2012.

Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns

As Portugal is undergoing a structural transformation of its economy, the main public policy challenge is the establishment of an efficient, low carbon and environmentally-friendly resilient economy. The Portuguese government is currently developing a **Commitment for Green Growth**^[3], which aims to comply with three major objectives by 2020:

- To position Portugal as a leader in green growth;
- To promote a low-carbon economy, highly efficient in resource use;
- To produce more wealth and jobs by investing in the sustainability of industries and territories.

Figure 2 - Green Growth at the centre of a new paradigm



Source: Commitment for Green Growth, 2014

For a country like Portugal, traditionally dependent on external **fossil energy resources**, it is essential to improve competitiveness through a more rational and efficient use of energy, while ensuring climate sustainability. So, in 2013, the new National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and the National Renewable Energies Action Plan^[4] were

approved for the period 2013-2020. These two plans established an overall goal of reducing primary energy consumption by 25% by 2020, and a specific goal for the public administration to reduce primary energy consumption by 30% by the same date.

Portugal is among the most vulnerable European countries when it comes to the **impacts of climate change**. To address this issue, the government has been working towards the implementation of a post-2012 climate policy, focusing its priorities on the operational parts of both the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation^[5] and the National Programme for Climate Change^[6]. The government has also focused on monitoring the reconfiguration of the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, on preparing the country for post-Kyoto challenges, and on reviewing the Portuguese Carbon Fund.

Concerning **waste management**, material and energy recovery has improved steadily over the years as a result of the policies implemented. A set of planning instruments is now under revision, in particular the Waste Management Tax and the licenses for waste and material flows. The Strategic Plan for Municipal Solid Waste for 2020 was recently approved^[7].

With regard to **water resources**, a new planning cycle is being prepared, which includes the revision of the National Water Plan^[8], further implementation of the National Program for the Efficient Use of Water^[9], and the review of the River Basin Management Plans^[10]. The new strategy for the urban water sector for the period 2014-2020, called "PENSAAR 2020 - A new strategy for the water-supply and wastewater treatment sectors (2014-2020)", will soon be published.

A central issue in Portuguese environmental policies is the vulnerability of the country's **coastal zones**. Policies regarding this subject have begun focusing on integrated coastal zone management, uniting maritime policies with climate-change adaptation policies. In 2014 the implementation process of the Coastal Valorisation and Protection Plan for Portugal (2012-15)^[11] will continue. The National Sea Strategy 2013-2020^[12] presents a new development model of ocean and coastal areas, which will allow Portugal to promote the growth and competitiveness of the maritime economy.

Country specific issues

The relationship between the economy and the environment is, at the moment, particularly relevant. Portugal is strongly committed to simultaneously improving economic growth, job creation, and environmental conditions.

At the same time, the government has recently approved a green fiscal reform in order to allocate resources efficiently while ensuring tax neutrality. Portugal has also developed an ambitious legislative reform concerning several areas of environment and spatial planning.

SOER 2015 country briefings provide an overview of state of the environment across 39 European countries. They are part of the EEA's report SOER 2015, addressing the state of, trends in and prospects for the environment in Europe. The EEA's task is to provide timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information on Europe's environment.

For **references**, see www.eea.europa.eu/soer or scan the QR code.

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