

Reduction of Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

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The UN/ECE [Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution](#) (Geneva Convention) is one of the most important international conventions for environment protection in Europe. It was prepared after a connection between the emissions of sulphur to the atmosphere in the continental Europe and the acidification of lakes in Scandinavia was scientifically proved. The further researches showed that air pollutants could be transported in the atmosphere over long distances before they settle and have adverse effects to the environment. Therefore the international cooperation was necessary to solve the acidification problems. The Geneva Convention was the first international legal document, which dealt with air pollution problems on a vast regional scale. The Geneva Convention was signed in 1979 in Geneva and entered into force in 1983.

After entering into force, eight protocols were adopted under the Geneva Convention:

- Protocol on Long-term Financing of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP), adopted in 1984;
- Protocol on Reduction of Sulphur Emissions or their Transboundary Fluxes by 30%, adopted in 1985;
- Protocol on Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes, adopted in 1988;
- Protocol on Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes, adopted in 1991;
- Protocol on Further Reduction of Sulphur Emissions, adopted in 1994;
- Protocol on Heavy Metals, adopted in 1998;
- Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants, adopted in 1998;
- Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone, adopted in 1999.

Latvia has acceded to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Cabinet of Ministers decision No.63, 07.06.1994) and to the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution on Long-term Financing of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) (Cabinet of Ministers Order No.13, 16.01.1997), and thus has undertaken to control and reduce emissions of pollutants. According to the EMEP Protocol Latvia will have to take part in the international Program on pollution monitoring and long-range air pollution estimation.

Latvia signed the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants in Aarhus (Denmark) on June 24, 1998. The Protocol refers to 16 especially dangerous substances and groups of substances: 12 pesticides (aldrin, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, hexabromobiphenyl, hexachlorobenzene, hexachlorocyclohexane, including its isomer lindane, heptachlor, chlordecone, mirex, toxaphene), 2 industrial chemicals (polychlorinated biphenyls and hexachlorobenzene) and 2 by-products (dioxins and furans). The main objective of the Protocol is to reduce or eliminate discharges, emissions and losses of these substances.

Latvia signed the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution on Heavy Metals in Aarhus (Denmark) on June 24, 1998. The Protocol refers to cadmium (Cd), lead (Pb) and mercury (Hg). The objective of the Protocol is to control emissions of heavy metals caused by anthropogenic activities that are subject to long-range transboundary atmospheric transport.

Latvia signed the to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone in Gothenburg (Sweden) on December 1, 1999. The Protocol decrees:

- Emission ceilings to four polluting compounds for year 2010: sulphur (expressed as SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and ammonia (NH₃); the emission ceilings were calculated based on the scientific criteria on adverse effects of pollution and possibilities to their reduction. After implementing the Protocol the percentage emission reduction is supposed to be 63% for sulphur, 41% for NO_x, 40% for VOC and 17% for NH₃ compared to year 1990. Latvia has adopted the following: till year 2010 to reduce by 10% in comparison to 1990 the pollution caused by sulphur, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. The ammonia pollution will remain on the level of 1990 (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.33 "On the total maximum allowable emission of air pollutants in the State", 22.01.2002);
- Emission limits for certain sources (boilers, power stations, dry cleaning, passenger cars, trucks etc.) and the use of best available technologies for preventing and reducing emissions. VOC emissions from paints, aerosols and other products should be controlled as well. The Parties to the Protocol will have to introduce specific measures to reduce ammonia emissions. Along with the Protocol, the guidelines were accepted for several emission reduction technologies and economic instruments to control emissions from corresponding source categories including transport.

Latvia has not acceded to other Protocols under the Geneva Convention, because the commitments are the same as those in the 1999 Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone.

To ensure that the commitments under the Geneva Convention and its Protocols are fulfilled, the monitoring of air pollution and measures to prevent pollution are being carried out, which help to reduce emissions of key polluting substances. The Ministry of Environment works out the strategic reports on the implementation of the Geneva Convention and its Protocols. The annual inventories on the emissions of pollutants (SO₂, NO_x, NH₃, CO, CH₄, VOC, heavy metals, POPs) are being prepared by the Latvian Environment Agency and State Hydrometeorology Board.

The Prime Minister Order No. 210 has established the Work group on June 25, 2002 (amended by the Prime Minister Order No.400 on December 23, 2002) to fulfill Latvia's international commitments under the Geneva Convention and its Protocols and to define the most important strategic directions. As ordered in paragraph 3 of this order, the Ministry of Environment has prepared the Draft of the Basic Orientations for years 2004-2010 to the Geneva Convention (announced during the meeting of State Secretaries' on September 25, 2003).

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