

PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN POLAND AND ITS TASKS IN REALIZATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – SOURCES AND DIRECTIONS OF FINANCING

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ABSTRACT

The work is an analysis of the environmental quality in Poland considering its basic components: air, water and protection of the earth. The Author analyses the level and structure of outlays on various projects aimed at environmental protection and water economy over a long period of time (1996-2005) and presents the sources of their financing. The detailed assessment was carried out for ecological funds, which are a part of pro-ecological endeavours structure and particularly helpful for acquisition of assistance funds from the European Union, and for co-financing self-governments implementing environmental projects in rural areas.

The financial means planned for 2007-2010 outlined together with their structure necessary to realize the obligations for the natural environment protection assumed by Poland.

Key words: natural environment resources, investment outlays, areas of financing, ecological policy

Introduction

Sustainable development is a long-term conception of socio-economic development considering current and future implications between systems of economy, society and natural environment. It is an answer to contemporary challenges and ecological hazards caused by hitherto unknown development of inparticulatery, transport and other branches of economy, but also progressing urbanization and technization of life. It involves such a way of economic and social management, shaping and use of environmental potential which will ensure a dynamic development of production processes and sustainability of natural resources utilization but also simultaneous improvement and maintaining high quality living standard. While striving to realize such aim, environmental protection should be inseparable part of the development processes. Under conditions in Poland undertakings in the area of environmental protection should be connected also with a necessity to repair tremendous ecological losses due to improper human interference in the natural environment.

Ecological losses caused by human activities in Poland under the previous economic regime were estimated for 1990 on the level of 8.1% of the global production at that time and 15.2% of gross domestic product (Famielec 1999).

Present paper aims to present the state of the natural environment and endeavours made for its improvement. Determined were the state of resources, outlays and directions of investments in individual areas of the natural environment. The basis for the analysis was provided by the data obtained from the Main Statistical Office, data from the

literature of the subject and form the Ministry of the Natural Environment.

2. Environmental quality diagnosis and adjustment processes

Along with the process of system and economic transformations, which took place in Poland at the beginning of the nineties of the previous century, considerable investment outlays were made for the protection of the natural environment. The outlays on the environmental protection reached the highest value in the second half of the nineties (1997 and 1998). The highest value (in current prices) was registered in 1998 (10.8 billion zlotys). At that time it constituted 1.9% of gross domestic product and about 10% of the total investment outlays in Poland. The amount of outlays started to decrease after 2000 reaching 0.8% of gross domestic product and c.a. 6% share of the protection investments in total investment expenditure (Tab.1). The expenses total per 1 inhabitant in 1996-2005 constituted between 196 and 202 zlotys in 2005, at the highest level of 279 zlotys in 1998.

Significant changes happened in the structure of outlays on pro-ecological investments in the natural environment area. These were apparent as sums spent on air and climate protection decreasing from almost 3.6 billion zlotys in 1996 to 1.1 billion zlotys in 2005 at an apparently increased spending on water protection, water supply and waste management from 1.2 billion zlotys to 3.6 billion in 2005. It was also accompanied by increasing expenditure on ventures connected with water management, mainly on water treatment, water tapping and supply systems (water supply systems were mainly constructed in rural areas), but also on water reservoir and

Table 1. Investment expenditure on environmental protection and water economy in 1996-2005

Specification	1996	1998	2000	2005	2005
Incomes in M zlotys (current prices)	7.552.9	10.766.9	8.223.0	7.307.9	7.702.3
Financial structure. Total = 100,0					
Protection of air and climate	47.6	43.1	29.4	15.8	14.9
Sewage disposal and water protection	28.6	31.8	40.6	42.8	46.9
Water economy	18.7	16.2	20.1	27.0	22.3
Waste management and earth protection	4.8	7.7	7.4	10.1	11.0
Other areas	0.43	1.2	2.0	4.3	4.9
Share in GDP [%]	2.0	1.9	1.1	0.8	0.8
Share in investments total [%]	11.6	9.5	6.1	6.0	5.9
Expenditure per 1inhabitant zl	196	279	213	191	202

Source: Elaborated on the basis of (Ochrona 2003 i 2006)

waterfall construction, regulation and plant consolidation of rivers and streams and flood defences. 1.4 billion zlotys was spent on these undertakings in 1996, whereas in 2004 almost 2 billion zlotys.

Poland is counted among countries deficient in water resources. Its total resources measured by the water outflow are 63.1 billion m³, which in conversion to 1 inhabitant is 1.6 thousand m³ (Ochrona 2006). Such level of water resources places our country in a position unfavourable in comparison with other European countries, since they are thrice smaller than the average for these countries, and seven times lower than water resources of such countries as: Finland or Sweden (Grzesiak et al 2002).

In 1990-2005 water intake for the needs of the inparticularities and the population decreased from 14.2 billion m³ to 10.9 billion m³. The decrease is the result of the restructuring of mainly power and pulp and paper inparticularity as well as declined water consumption by the inhabitants using water supply systems owing to limiting losses in water distribution, installing water meters and increased water prices for households, which inclines the consumers to save water. An apparent decline in water consumption by city dwellers from 76m³ in 1990 to 37m³ in 2005 *per capita* was observed (Ochrona 2006).

The surface waters tapped from rivers and lakes, which in 2005 constituted 9.2 billion m³ of total requirements, and underground water resources of 1.6 billion m³ are the main sources of water supply in Poland. In the structure of water use 70.7% go to the inparticularity needs, the share of agriculture and forestry make up 10.1%, whereas 19.2% falls to the users of water mains network (mainly public utilities).

Pollution and degradation of water resources are mainly caused by sewage discharge from inparticularities and by individual users. The volume of inparticularial effluents and municipal treatable sewage declined in 1990-2005 by 49%, i.e. from 4.1 billion m³ to 2.1 billion m³. In 2005 untreated sewage constituted 186 M m³ of which 6.2% was inparticularial sewage and 10.5% was the wastewater drained by the municipal sewer system. Despite considerable outlays on water management and sewage disposal, constructing of sewer system and sewage treatment plants, still considerable volume of sewage, almost 186mln m³ and 57 mln m³ of treated sewage is discharged into rivers, lakes and soil. The proportions of individual types of sewage treatment plants operating in cities in 2005 looked as follows 57% - biological treatment plants, 40.6% - plants with upgraded level of biogen removal and 1.9% - mechanical sewage treatment plants. In 1995 the respective types of sewage treatment plants made up 74.9%, 5.9% and 19.2% of the structure (Ochrona 2006). At that time only 42% of the country inhabitants were using the sewage treatment plants, whereas in 2005 the percent of population was much higher, reaching 60.2%, of which city dwellers made up 85.2% and rural inhabitants 20.4%. The National Programme of municipal sewage treatment adjusted to the European Union requirements assumes that by 2015 all city agglomerations inhabited by more 2 thousand people will be equipped with sewage treatment plants, which means that during about 10 years about 900 new sewage treatment plants and 450 sewer systems must be constructed.

A noticeable progress in limiting pollutant emission into the atmosphere as particulates and gases

was observed after 1990. It was possible owing to closing down numerous factories and power plants harmful for the environment, progress in economy restructuring and improvement of its efficiency, as well as due to a better utilisation of fuels and raw materials, among others owing to replacement of traditional energy carriers by substitutes less arduous for the natural environment. In the same period changes in the structure of solid fuel, i.e. hard coal and brown coal utilisation were observed. Their share in total primary energy generated in 1988 constituted almost 80%, whereas in 2005 only 60%. It was possible by greater utilization of such energy carriers

as petroleum and natural gas and increasing the share of renewable sources of energy, i.e. biomass and energy generated by unconventional methods, i.e. water, wind, sun or geothermal energy, which in 2005 made up 3.5% of the total structure. According to Poland's accession obligations, in 2010 the share of these sources of energy should reach 7.5%. The outlays and undertaken activities resulted in diminishing the total gas and particulate emission to the atmosphere. In 2005 sulphur dioxide emission decreased by 61.3% in comparison with 2005, emission of nitrogen oxides by 37.2%, carbon oxide by 24% and carbon dioxide by 17% (Tab.2).

Table 2. Total emission of main air pollutants in Poland in 1996-2005

Pollutants ¹	1990	1995	2000	2005	Per 1 inhabitant
	In thousand tons				
Sulphur dioxide	3210	2376	1511	1241	32,5
Nitrogen oxides ²	1280	1120	838	804	21,1
Carbon oxide	-	4547	3463	3426	89,8
Carbon dioxide	381482	348926	314812	316700	8299
Particulate matter ³	1950	1308	464	443	11,6

1. Estimated data. 2. nitrogen oxide calculated in NO₂, 3 for the years 1990-1995 emission from stationary sources and for the years 2000 and 2004 from stationary and mobile sources – data for these year incomparable with previous years.

Source: Data from National Center for Emission Sources Inventory [in:] Ochrona 2006.

Reduction of particulate emission to the atmosphere was also registered, however due to a change in the counting method the values are incomparable with each other.

Despite the progress connected with reduction of pollutant emission, obtained rates of gas and particulate emission to the atmosphere are still high. Equivalent pollutant emission rate computed for 2003 and expressed in sulphur dioxide equivalent for Poland was 181.6kg, whereas in the European Union countries it was 143.9kg, for Japan 63kg and similar values for Czech Republic -185.5kg, for Hungary 195.3 and for Slovakia 163 kg per 1 inhabitant¹ (Radwan 2004).

Hitherto expenditure on the earth protection and waste management should be considered insufficient in relation to the remedial tasks. During the analyzed period only 4.8% of capita expenditure were allocated to this area and 11.1% in 2005. In 2005 about 140M wastes was produced of which municipal wastes constituted 7%, whereas in 1990 the respective values were 155M tons and 7.2% (Ochrona

2006). An improvement in utilization and management of wastes from the sector of the economy was observed in 1990-2005. In 1990 only 54% of them was reused, in 2005 it was 79.3% at simultaneous decrease in the deposited wastes from 46% to 13.4%. Wastes gathered for years reached 1.8 billion tons in 2005 and their storage area occupies about 10 thou. ha. A majority of wastes (62%) is generated in two provinces: Łódzkie and dolnośląskie. Poland belongs to countries which produce the greatest amounts of wastes in Europe. In conversion to gross national product unit, the amount several times exceeds the rates for selected well developed countries. In 2003 160 kg of wastes was produced per 1000 USD (GDP), whereas the respective amount in Germany was 30 kg, in the United Kingdom and Japan 40 kg and in France, Spain and Austria 80 kg (Radwan 2004).

Despite a considerable progress, Polish economy is still characterized by a high degree of energy consumption, resources consumption and environ-

¹ Equivalent emission was computed by multiplication of values of nitrogen oxide and particulates by 2.9 and carbon oxides by 0.5 and adding sulphur dioxide emission.

ment consumption. It is perceived as much higher use of resources and energy than in many well developed countries in the world. Energy intensity rate computed for Poland is c.a. 30% higher than in the EU countries or Japan but comparable with American economy. In 2003 the energy intensity expressed in units (tons of equivalent oil) per 1000 USD (gross domestic product) was 0.32 in Poland, 0.26 in Austria, 0.17 in Spain and Japan, 0.19 in the United Kingdom, Germany and France and 0.25 in the US. According to Ney (2001) energy consumption of Polish economy in 1991 was 0.576. High energy consumption of produced GDP was caused by many factors, mainly by existing industry structure in which branches consuming large amounts of raw materials dominated, with considerable share of old-fashioned heavy industry, using energy intensive and material-consuming technologies, extensive economy with low-efficient labour and inconvenient structure of generated primary energy basing on solid raw materials (hard and brown coal), but it was also due to a lack of habit of rational energy use in the society. Sources of primary energy saving should be also sought in decreasing energy intensity of the economy, limiting losses in its transport (especially heat transfer) and diversification of energy carriers so far dominated by coal. It should be mentioned that industry, like in most countries is the main recipient of primary energy, which in Poland constitutes about 60% of the total generated energy.

Waste storage on landfills remains the main way to manage municipal wastes, of which 254 kg per one inhabitant were gathered in Poland. A considerable part, almost 94.1% find their way to landfills and only 2% are sorted. Still too small portion is processed at composting plants or in waste incinerators, whereas in well developed countries only between 40 and 60% of wastes go to landfills, even though more is produced *per capita*. For instance, in 2004 about 537 kg were produced per 1 inhabitant in the EU countries, 600kg in the United Kingdom, 567 in France, 600 kg in Germany, 506 kg in Hungary and 238 in Czech Republic (Ochrona 2006). The plans outlined until 2010 assume the recovery of 10% of municipal wastes at considerable diminishing their amounts sent to landfills (Polityka 2006).

New legal regulations have been in force in Poland since 1 January and financial instruments compatible with the European Union requirements (Directive 94/62WE) providing bases for creating a rational system of waste management. Entrepreneurs were obliged to selective collection and then recovery and recycling of hazardous wastes, harmful for the environment (Law on product charge and deposit fee and law on packing and packing wastes have been in

force since 2002). The legal regulations and fees aim to prevent waste accumulation on landfills. Particular attention was paid to certain groups of products and materials, arduous and harmful for the environment (used car-batteries, batteries, car tyres, refrigerating and air-conditioning equipment, waste oils, plastic wrappings, aluminium, paper, glass, etc).

The amount of product and deposit fees depend on the degree of their arduousness to the environment, difficulties with their recycling and recovery. The law on wastes (2001) currently in force makes obligatory development of the national plans of waste management. These plans should be strictly connected with environmental protection programmes prepared for individual areas and comply with the ecological policy of the State. It should serve to find rational, ecological, technical and economic solutions (Radwan 2004).

Presented quality of the natural environment considering its three components: water, air and earth protection shows the scale of problems which the economy and society face in Poland to prevent hazards and degradation of the natural environment and to improve it. It also results from contractual obligations to restore the natural environment assumed by Poland after accession to the European Union.

3. Ways and directions of financing pro-ecological measures in Poland

Financing the natural environment protection and water economy projects in Poland is based on the enterprises' own funds, financial means from municipality (*gmina*) budgets, foreign ecological funds (assistance programmes) and on credits and bank loans. Shares of individual sources of pro-ecological investments financing in 1997- 2005 were compiled in Table 3. The first, basic group of investors consists of enterprises and municipalities, whose share in the investment outlays on environmental protection makes up between 48.9% and 49.1% and on water economy between 46.9% and 46.1%. The outlays are supplemented by funding from ecological funds, foreign sources, credits and bank loans and budgetary means.

The sources of funding mentioned above are the core of the system. However, with progressing economy and system transformations and development of new market entities, one should expect enlargement of investment sources. However, the most means still come from enterprises, municipalities and ecological funds following the rule "the polluter pays". Hitherto available means on environmental protection are insufficient, therefore foreign funding acquired from assistance programmes

Table 3. Sources of pro-ecological project financing in Poland in 1997-2005

Specification	1997	2003	2005	1997	2003	2005
	Environmental protection			Water economy		
Sources of financing:						
- own means (of economic subjects and municipalities)	48.9	44.8	49.1	46.9	41.7	46.1
- ecological funds	16.9	25.3	21.2	5.2	13.6	16.3
- domestic credits and loans	16.5	13.9	7.6	3.5	3.6	4.7
- budgetary means ¹	5.8	2.5	2.7	33.1	14.2	17.3
- foreign means	3.8	8.8	16.0	0.5	22.6	11.0
- other means	8.2	4.7	3.4	10.8	4.3	4.6
Groups of investors:						
- enterprises	62.4	47.7	47.2	20.3	24.6	33.7
- municipalities	34.9	50.5	50.4	52.3	35.8	33.5
- budgetary units	2.7	1.8	2.5	27.4	39.6	32.8

¹ Means from central budget, provincial and district self-governments

Source: Elaborated on the basis of (Ochrona 2006)

and from bank sector units is very important.

The main investors in pro-ecological projects in the nineties comprised enterprises whose share in the protection of the natural environment constituted 62.4%, while a growing share of municipalities was marked after 2000. Municipalities' and budgetary units' participation in the investments was especially visible in the outlays on water economy. These units have been active financially supporting water mains and water treatment plant construction in rural areas, as well as development of combined sewerage systems and wastewater treatment plants construction. In 2005 about 2.1 billion zlotys was spent on these projects in Poland owing to significant support of municipalities and their inhabitants. Assistance funds from the European Union in the frame of ISPA, SAPARD and PHARE programmes made up a considerable share of 500M zlotys.

Financial means obtained from ecological funds are a notable contribution to the investment structure. Their involvement over the last years was growing both in the environmental protection and in water economy financing. The funds play an important role in projects realized by self-governments, municipalities and budgetary units. In 2003-2005 ecological funds contributed 11.5 billion zlotys to the above mentioned projects (Tab.4). In the structure of expenditure in the form of grants and loans the greatest shares fell to provincial environmental protection funds and water economy funds (47.3%), the National

Fund (35.4%), district (*powiat*) and municipal (*gmina*) funds, which comprised 17.3%. Ecological funds in Poland function on the basis of the "Law on the Protection of the National environment" and have a four-level structure. The National Fund and 16 provincial funds have legal personality, whereas the district (*powiat*) and municipal funds do not. The source of income for the funds are fees for the use of the natural environment, sewage, gases and particulates discharge to the environment, water protection, water tapping and waste disposal and incomes from fines for tree and bush cutting down and for infringement of environmental protection laws. Incomes of the funds (the National and provincial ones) comprise dues from loans and bank credits, profits from stock market (securities and shares dealing), voluntary contributions, bequests, gifts, performances in re and means from foundations, etc.

Incomes generated from the above mentioned sources in 2003-2005 reached 7 175 M zlotys, of which 32.2% fell for the National Fund, 38.4% for provincial funds, 6.4% for district funds and 23% for municipal funds. The main source of income were fees for the use of national environment (69.2), then fines for cutting down trees and bushes, infringement of environmental protection requirements and products fees, which jointly made up 11.6%. The other incomes originate from loan interest rates, free means and other sources, and comprised 19.2% (Sprawozdanie 2006).

Table 4. Areas of pro-ecological project financing by ecological funds in 2003-2005

Funding from environmental protection and water economy	Expenditure ¹ M zlotys	Sewage disposal and water protection	Atmospheric air and climate protection	Waste management	Other
National	4073.8	32.5	28.0	5.7	33.8
Provincial	5455.7	53.7	22.5	7.2	16.6
District	468.2	17.9	30.5	26.0	25.6
Municipal	1525.6	41.2	15.6	10.6	32.6
Funds - total	11523.3	43.1	23.8	7.9	25.2

¹ Included financing from loans and grants

Source: Computed on the basis of (Ochrona 2006).

Generally, financing in the form of loans and credits constituting 50.3% of the spent means prevailed in the funds for the years 2003-2005. At that time the unreturnable funding made up 47.9%. The latter form of financing was characteristic for district and municipal funds. Capital funding, purchase of parts, securities and shares in consortia constituted 1.8% and comprised the National Fund and provincial funds.

Beneficiaries of financing allocated to the environmental protection comprise local self-government units (municipalities, districts and self-government provinces) and units of the public finances sector, which jointly used up 73.1% of means. Such big shares are connected with tasks appointed to respective funds and associated with absorption of the EU funds originating from cohesion and structural funds, mainly ISPA and SAPARD. It also influences the type structure of expenditure on the natural environment protection, in which outlays on water protection and water economy prevail together with construction of sewer system and wastewater treatment plants, which to considerable degree are realized by municipalities and municipalities unions. These facts were confirmed by reports of the provincial funds for the years 1993-2003 in which proportions of expenditure on the environmental protection looked as follows: water protection, water supply and sewage disposal 53.5%, protection of air and climate 27.7%; waste management 8.2% and the other areas 10.6% (Radwan 2004).

Considering the types of expenditure on main areas of environmental protection, in 2003-2005 the funds allocated the highest proportion funds (43.1%) to water protection and water supply and sewage disposal. This area of expenditure prevails in the National Fund in provincial funds and municipal funds. So far it has happened at the cost of diminishing expenses on endeavours connected with the protec-

tion of air and climate, whose share in the preceding years revealed a successive decline from 31.3% in 1994 to 22.9% in 2002 (Radwan 2004).

The outlays on the earth protection and waste management are low and still diminishing position in the funds, they decreased from 10.3% in 1999 to 8.6% in 2002, whereas in 2003-2005 the share of funds was even lower, i.e. 7.9%. In this area district (*powiat*) funds were the most involved (26.9%). The other areas of the environmental protection have registered an increase in relative expenditure share from 11.5% in 1999 to 23.4% in 2002 and 25.2% in the following years. Such structure of expenses is markedly affected the means from the National Fund allocated to mining industry (damage removal, reclamation of workings after exploitation of brown coal, sulphur and sand), geological works, expenses on protection of the natural environment, landscape, on forestry, environmental monitoring, financing of research and dissemination of ecological knowledge supported by other funds.

According to the State Ecological Policy for 2007-2010 formulated by the Ministry of the Natural Environment with the further perspective for 2010-2014, assumes necessary outlays of 63.8 billion zlotys on investment projects and about 1.8 billion zlotys for non-investment projects (Tab.5). It means that on average about 16.5 billion zlotys should be spent annually. The amount of outlays results from Poland's obligations towards the EU structure (implementation of the EU directives for the years 2007-2010) and was determined as 52.4 billion zlotys (Polityka 2006).

Taking into consideration the hitherto structure and prospective expenditure on the environmental protection it is obvious that the following should increase:

- outlays on the areas connected with the use of natural resources to diminish society pressure upon the natural environment involving pollutant emission

Table 5. Financial means for realization of state ecological policy (2007-2010) – prices in 2005 .

Main areas	Investment projects		Non-investment projects	
	M zlotys	%	M zlotys	%
Air and climate protection	18 600	29.1	100	5.6
Sewage disposal and water protection	28 500	44.6	150	8.4
Water economy	6 400	10.0	80	4.5
Waste management	6 500	10.2	160	8.9
Noise protection	2 500	3.9	45	2.5
Protection of nature, biodiversity and landscape	820	1.3	650	36.3
Other activities	532	0.8	219	12.2
Tools and instruments for task realization	80	0.1	388	21.6
TOTAL	63 852	100.0	1 792	100.0

Sources: Elaborated on the basis of (Polityka 2006)

into the air, sewage discharge, protection of soils and waste management. Human activity should focus on modernization processes in the economy to limit material consumption, water consumption and raw material consumption, decrease the use and improvement of efficiency of utilized resources, limiting the "end of pipe" investments for the benefit of integrated investments,

- expenditure on activities aimed at improving the natural environment, which under Polish conditions belong to the most expensive, the most difficult to implement because of their scale and scope. However, they have a significant effect upon the quality and living standards of the society. These include endeavours aimed at protection of water resources of the country, which is connected with improvement of water supply and sewage disposal. It requires construction and modernization of existing sewer systems and wastewater treatment plants in cities and in rural areas, construction of retention water reservoirs, waterfalls but also flood defences. About 35 billion zlotys will be allocated on these undertakings until 2010,

- outlays on improvement of air quality and counteracting climate changes, involving diminished energy consumption, changes in economy structures through diminishing the share of energy-intensive industries and using energy carriers less arduous to the environment through their further diversification, successively increasing share of energy from unconventional and renewable sources. The means planned on counteractions connected with improvement of air and climate quality will amount to almost 19 billion zlotys,

- expenditure, amounting to over 6.5 billion zlotys has been planned on waste management, to meet requirements of recycling and recovery of

packaging materials, construction, modernization and reclamation of codisposal landfill sites. Limiting large sized and construction waste dumping by improved system of waste collection, their management and recovery.

Any measures aiming at protection of the natural environment, landscape and biodiversity should be undertaken more vehemently than hitherto. Endeavours in this area comprise both investments and non-investment projects, therefore they should be connected with supporting research works on natural environment quality and biodiversity, reintroduction of vanishing species, protection of valuable environment, natural forests and plant alliances, but they should aim to create new and expand the existing landscape parks and natural reserves, or supporting organic and integrated agriculture and development of ecological education.

The directions and tasks in the environmental protection and water economy mentioned above will require investments twice higher than in 2005. At least a half of the investments outlays will be made by enterprises and municipalities, about 1/5 of funding will be provided by ecological funds, 1/5 will originate from the EU assistance funds (cohesion and structural funds), whereas the other means will be derived from the public finances.

Conclusion

Implementation of the conception of sustainable development is inseparably connected with improvement of the natural environment quality. Under conditions in Poland it requires considerable financial outlays, which in 2003-2005 should reach annually on average about 16.5 billion zlotys. Remediation of the natural environment quality should comprise mainly: protection of the atmospheric air and climate, protection of waters and water supply

and sewage disposal, as well as protection of soil and waste management. It should be enhanced by further transformations in the structure of economy aiming to develop the areas of raw material and energy saving.

Enterprises', municipalities and budgetary units' own funds will be of crucial importance in financing the environmental protection in the approaching years. From among the European Union funds the most important will be ecological funds, National fund and provincial funds which support endeavours in the protection of the national environment.

The environmental protection projects will be possible to realize under conditions of dynamic economic growth only if high absorption of means from the EU programmes is ensured. It should be accompanied by properly formulated and efficiently realized tasks supported by investors' own funds, whose guaranteed share should reach the level of about 1.7 gross domestic product in 2007-2010.

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