

# The results of the European environmental report

**As many of the advances in environmental protection in Europe have been stymied by the growth of business, the drafting and implementation of policies that take environmental needs fully into account, must be speeded up. This is the conclusion of the European Environment Agency in its third European environmental report.**

The third environmental report by the European Environment Agency calls for the increased integration of environment protection issues in politics and business for better protection of the environment and a more sustainable development in Europe. The drafting and implementation of policies which take environmental needs into consideration must be speeded up.

This includes the introduction of economic incentives and voluntary agreements with business. Here too, Switzerland has had both national and international successes (e.g. VOC [volatile organic compound] tax, voluntary agreements relating to the CO<sub>2</sub> Act, partnerships with mobile telephone manufacturers under the Basel Convention, etc.).

## **Improvements ...**

The status of the environment in Europe varies greatly according to the region (see The three faces of Europe's environment). The European environmental report shows that the state of the environment has improved in the following areas:

- Far fewer emissions of substances which harm the ozone layer
- Less air pollution and improved air quality
- Localised improvements of biodiversity due to designation and protection of natural areas.

**and**

## **... Setbacks**

The state of the environment continues to be unsatisfactory in the following areas:

- Insufficient waste management
- Overfishing
- Soil erosion and loss of soil fertility
- Increasing air pollution in towns in transition economies
- Increasing concentration of new chemical pollutants
- Land contaminated by toxic waste and toxic chemicals

## **The three faces of Europe's environment**

The status of the environment in Europe varies greatly from region to region. This is the conclusion of the pan-European environmental report written (for the third time following 1995 and 1998) by the European Environment Agency (EEA) with a view to the 'Environment for Europe' ministerial conference in Kiev. For the first time this report contains an overview of all CIS States.

- The 22 countries of western Europe (including Switzerland) have high environmental standards but use up a lot of resources.
- In the 18 Central and Eastern European States (including the States of the EU eastern enlargement) environmental problems are increasing with the development of business (e.g. increasing air pollution in towns).
- The 12 CIS States of Central Asia and the Caucasus have vast tracts of unspoilt nature and the environment there is in better condition than it was in Soviet times due to the drop in traffic and industry. On the other hand, toxic waste and inefficient irrigation is a problem, and biodiversity is declining due to the restructuring of agriculture. Raw materials supplies are being produced for export to western Europe, generating huge environmental pollution.