

Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Hazardous waste management



Hazardous waste and security

Hazardous waste and chemicals, if not properly managed, can have a grave impact on the environment and public health as they can contaminate water, soil and the atmosphere. The OSCE helps its participating States to effectively manage hazardous waste and chemicals and to minimize the serious security risks that they pose.

While hazardous waste and chemicals are a threat to all OSCE participating States, several states are exposed to high risks of contamination from hazardous waste accumulated at old industrial complexes, including legacies of Soviet-era uranium mining.

Illegal transboundary movement in hazardous waste is a lucrative criminal business and a major internationally recognized challenge that also poses risks to security in the OSCE area. The OSCE responds to this threat by strengthening national capacities to pre-empt the illegal trafficking in hazardous waste and mitigate emerging risks of illegal pesticides.

Mandate

The threat posed by hazardous waste management and the need for co-operation among states was mentioned in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, to which the Organization traces its origins.

Since then, the participating States have agreed a number of OSCE commitments on enhancing their management of hazardous waste and expanding the OSCE's mandate in supporting efforts to this end.



Hazardous chemicals are loaded into trucks to be shipped for safe destruction as part of a project run by the OSCE Presence in Albania.

The OSCE's activities in hazardous waste management are a part of the international effort to secure a more sustainable future for all, and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal is the most comprehensive global environmental agreement and regulates the transboundary movements of hazardous and other waste. Of the 186 parties to the Basel Convention, 54 are OSCE participating States.



What we do

The Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, in co-operation with the field operations, helps OSCE participating States to address the risks related to hazardous waste.

The Office implements projects that tackle challenges ranging from outdated pesticides and ozone-depleting substances to mining waste and stockpiles of toxic liquid rocket fuel components as well as other hazardous chemicals.

Uranium waste

As part of the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative, the OSCE, together with the

UN Development Programme and UN Environment, is supporting the engagement of stakeholders in uranium legacy remediation in Central

Asia through training courses, information dissemination and public consultations.

The OSCE-supported Aarhus Centres in Osh, Kyrgyzstan and Khujand, Tajikistan are actively involved in raising awareness among the local population about the dangers of such radioactive waste.

The OSCE is also engaged in the Co-ordination Group on Uranium Legacy Sites set up under the leadership of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to support a network of national and international organizations concerned with the safe management of waste at uranium production legacy sites in Central Asia.

Industrial hazardous waste legacies

In Armenia and Georgia, the OSCE conducted an assessment of risks related to the hazardous waste

accumulated at Soviet era industrial legacy sites, and assisted both governments with developing practical recommendations to reduce or eliminate these risks. The outcomes of the assessments form the basis for policy development and action planning in the field of hazardous waste management in these countries.

Mélange

The OCEEA has supported the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and field operations in their activities to eliminate mélange, a highly toxic and volatile rocket propellant component used in short- and medium-range missiles.



The OSCE supports stakeholder engagement in uranium legacy remediation in several priority sites such as in Kyrgyzstan, with the help of local Aarhus Centres.



The OSCE developed an action plan for the safe handling and disposal of hazardous waste in Georgia's Tsana area where inadequately managed arsenic containing waste poses environmental risks.

What we do (continued)

Illegal trafficking of hazardous waste

The OSCE has trained customs officers, border guards and environmental authorities from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine to more effectively prevent the illegal trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste and other cross-border environmental crimes.

Training events and materials prepared with the support of the OSCE include relevant information about the hazardous waste and ozone-depleting substances that are often illegally trafficked across borders. Training materials produced by the OSCE are also shared with relevant stakeholders in other regions.



An expert demonstrates the detective ability of a trained dog at a regional workshop for customs authorities co-organized by the OSCE on detecting the illegal trafficking of hazardous waste in Ukraine.

Providing tools and guidance

The OSCE develops publications on hazardous waste management to assist practitioners with reference materials in support of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities.



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