

PART III. NATIONAL REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR CSD-14/15 THEMATIC AREAS

A. ATMOSPHERE/AIR POLLUTION

Government focal point(s): _____

Responding ministry/office(s): _____

The air in Iceland is in general clean and less polluted than the air in more densely populated countries in Europe and North America. This is partly the result of a small population living in a large country, far from major industrial sources of pollution. Clean power sources of geothermal energy and hydropower also contribute to good air quality. Air pollution outside of the Reykjavik area is generally not considered a problem in Iceland, except in isolated instances where there is polluting industry such as odour pollution from fishmeal plants.

Air pollution in the greater Reykjavik area is considered a problem, however, even though it is less than in many or most cities of comparable size in developed countries. The main cause of pollution is increasingly heavy traffic. Traffic is expected to grow with Greater Reykjavik's increasing population and if air pollution is to be significantly decreased, a more environmentally sound technology must be developed for transport – apart from government action and a public will to use such means of transport. Particulate pollution, which is partly the result of studded tyres on cars, is a problem not widely known outside of Iceland and is a priority issue in relation to regional air pollution. Particulate pollution can also occur outside of the Reykjavik area, especially in the vicinity of areas suffering from soil erosion during high winds. Curbing soil erosion can therefore mitigate air pollution.

New limits for air pollutants will come into effect in the years 2005-2010, while further limits will also be set for other specific air pollutants such as benzene, PAH and certain heavy metals. Iceland has agreed to minimize discharge and to sustain the quality of air in accordance to the international convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP).

Lead pollution of the atmosphere has been almost completely eliminated by first imposing a fee on leaded gasoline, and then imposing a complete ban on its use and sale.

In the transport plan adopted to the Icelandic Parliament in 2002, sustainable transport is one of the four main goals introduced, and therein the actions to be taken to achieve those goals are described. Particular emphasis is put on the role of transport in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, for example through the shortening of transport routes, better transport facilities and traffic control.