

# EPA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established in 1960 to promote economic growth among its member nations, to promote international financial stability and to expand world trade. Its 25 members include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Yugoslavia is an Associate Member.

In 1970 the Council of the OECD set up an Environment Committee as a forum for discussion of environmental issues and for cooperation in dealing with common problems. The Environment Committee held a Ministerial-level Meeting in Paris in May, 1979, to assess the state of the international environment, to assess the actions of their governments on environmental issues, and to discuss future policies and programs. EPA Administrator Douglas M. Costle presided.

The communique issued at the conclusion of the meeting confirmed progress made over the past decade in many fields. The report highlighted, in particular, achievements in the control of pollution in fresh water bodies and urban areas, reduction of the flow into the environment of certain persistent chemicals, the extension of national and regional parks and the protection and rehabilitation of sites of social or cultural value. It said "these improvements in environmental quality have generated significant benefits, without in most cases negative effects on the economy."

The communique said, however that "environmental quality remains a source of concern in certain fields, such as the supply and quality of water, including, in particular areas, drinking water; the adverse effect of the excessive use of fertilizers; the impact on ecosystems of the long-range transport of airborne pollutants; air pollution by recently recognized pollutants; increasing noise levels in some areas; the risk of accidents involving hazardous substances; and, in general, the growing evidence of linkage between environmental deterioration and human health." Reflecting growing concern over toxic chemicals, the Ministers called for a high-level OECD meeting in 1980 to consider technical issues of toxic chemical control.

EPA is actively involved in OECD projects involving toxic chemicals. Among these is a project aimed at developing international standards for good laboratory practices, so that tests performed in one country may be acceptable in others. EPA is encouraging OECD nations to adopt American standards for public release of

health and safety data on toxic substances. These proposals are largely due to the stringent import and export provisions of the Toxic Substances Control Act. Common testing and regulatory standards between the United States and other OECD nations will greatly facilitate implementation of that law.

EPA is active in several OECD subsidiary groups. One group will hold a seminar on urban transport and the environment in July, 1979, followed by a tour of American mayors to European cities to inspect European concepts of traffic control. Another group will hold a conference on noise abatement policies in 1980. Other groups are working on water management, air management, economic issues, wildlife sampling and analysis, and pollution control for particular industries.

EPA contributes to the work of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD. A particular concern of the Nuclear Energy Agency is development of international policies for disposal of radioactive waste. EPA has urged member nations to adopt land disposal methods rather than ocean dumping.



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