

## **ENVIRONMENT: TO-DAY'S UNDERSTANDING AND TO-MORROW'S CONSCIOUSNESS**

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Several decades ago environmental topics were a hobby of the friends of nature, nowadays these problems require serious attitude. Environment concerns us all affecting every aspect of life on the Earth. Environment influences all our activities - how we are living, working, having a rest, our health, safety, and life quality.

Being citizens of the European Union we are aware about achievements and failures in this field. And in the last years we have more positive than negative tendencies. However, negative impact accumulating from last centuries due to technological blunders has left serious consequences. Global environment deterioration in the last decades is the result of human activities. First of all must be mentioned water and atmosphere pollution, excessive use of natural resources, destruction of habitats. Natural resources which society uses for it's benefits are not unlimited. Forests, water, and soil do not recover to the quality which would be yearned for. Environment protection and rational employment is the responsibility of society.

World Wildlife Fund warns that ice in Polar regions and on mountains is already melting. Average temperature increase by the 0.8 centigrade in year is very dangerous indicator. Especially worrisome is the ice melting process in Himalaya which can affect hundreds of millions inhabitants in India, China, and Nepal. Floods in these regions will be followed by the period of drought with the scarcity of the potable water.

Floods and hurricanes have lately affected also European territories which can be identified as effects of the global temperature increase.

Depths of the Baltic Sea are in the state of asphyxia which is the result of the organic and inorganic pollution. Responsibility for this lays on all Baltic Sea region countries and solutions must be searched for in close co-operation.

However, people are starting to understand environmental problems and society possesses knowledge and technical means to diminish negative tendencies.

Quality of air we are breathing and water we are drinking do not depend from the influence of single country, it can not be restricted by borders, it can be increased only by mutual effort of all European countries (at least).

Understanding of environmental problems has been developing during the decades. In the European Union it is now based on mutual understanding of problems in the context of sustainable development.

Targeted project financing is one of the instruments in the EU. Every year hundreds of millions euro are spent for the improvement of the environmental infrastructure, but only 2...3% improvement in the coming ten to twenty years is expected in comparison with the current condition concerning emission of hazardous substances, acidity or water and soil, and rehabilitation of overall environment. Hurricanes, floods, and fast temperature changes will become more frequent.

Globalization leads not only to new challenges but also to new means for the environmental problem solving. Several positive tendencies can be seen during last decades:

- substantial decrease in the emission of toxic inorganic industrial substances (lead, mercury, etc.),
- lot of substances responsible for the degradation of the ozone layer have been replaced,
- emission of sulfur dioxide (responsible for the acidification) have been decreased,
- more and more household and industrial waste is being recycled,
- wastewater treating facilities have increased water quality in the rivers and sea.

We must consider also the needs of next generations. Environmental situation optimization begins with the transformation of human attitudes, because the solution of environmental problems depends from decisions taken by individuals correspondingly to there level of responsibility. Ecological education is most important part for the achieving strategic goals of sustainable development.

Between vast amounts of environmental web sites one can find also our conference home page [www.ecobalt.lv](http://www.ecobalt.lv). We are proud that contributors to our conference are young people. This is assurance that next generations will have better environment.

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