

Latvian Environment Data Centre as the present and potential environment information resource in the Baltic Sea Region

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Abstract

Latvian Environment Data Centre (LEDC) is subordinated to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development of Latvia and deals with:

- Implementing information technologies to support experts and decision makers in the ministry with environmental information;
- Emission statistical data bases;
- GIS and thematic map production;
- Coordination of EEA activities in Latvia as National Focal Point

LEDC experts participated in the BALLERINA initiative since June, 1996 and had taken active compain in the ministry to get support to extend activities in the future. The results are quite good.

The short english report "State of Environment in Latvia in 1996" in cooperation with Environment Consulting and Monitoring Centre has been prepared to publish on WWW server.

LEDC uses different information technolgies for information dissemination-mostly WWW server, GIS data bases. Now LEDC is testing on-line access application for the ministry experts to get the statistical data about emission into water via Internet. The first experiments will be extended for other data bases. The access to the most importand data will supported in English, as well.

Establishing EIONET node point of Latvia in the LEDC will be a new phase of capacity building for environmental information dissemination in Internet.

I Basic facts about Latvian Environ- ment Data Centre

Latvian Environment Data Centre (LEDC) is subordinated to the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (the Ministry) and it has obtained its present status due to re-organization of Environment Protection Committee into the Ministry in 1993. LEDC consists of two main departments: Data Processing Department (DPD) and Laboratory Department (LD), and both the goal and main objectives of each department completely differs.

I.1 Data Processing Department goal and objectives

The goal of DPD is establishment of Environmental Data Information System. There are some of the main objectives DPD is responsible for:

- implementation of information technologies to support the Ministry's experts and decision makers with environmental information;
- statistical data bases and annual reports;
 - * Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and thematic maps;
 - * co-ordination of European Environment Agency (EEA) activities in Latvia;
- implementation of international projects and programmes (CORINE Land Cover, HELCOM

Pollution Load Compilation, Integrated Coastal Zone Management, etc.);

I.2 Laboratory Department goal and objectives

The goal of LD is establishment of Latvian Environment Quality Testing Laboratory System and the main objectives of LD are:

- laboratory methodology adoption and introduction of internationally comparable standard methods;
- co-ordination of environmental quality testing and organisation of national inter-laboratory comparison studies of environmental quality testing in Latvia;
- complicate environment quality tests.

2 LEDC significance in information technology development

As the overall aim of the BALLE-RINA initiative is: to contribute to the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region environment, by improving the availability and accessibility of relevant information on the Internet, further this presentation will be devoted to observe LEDC as one of environmental information technology development founders/pioneers in Latvia.

2.1 Environmental data at present...

LEDC as one of the environmental information providers in Latvia offers the following environmental information resources about Latvia:

- annual statistical reports:
 - * emission into air;
 - * emission into water;
 - * emission of hazardous waste;
 - * production of chemical substances;
- gamma radiation monitoring data base;
- data base of protected nature areas;
- data base of water resources;
- digital maps:
 - * soil genetic types, 1953 ;
 - * inland water quality monitoring posts, 1995 and 1997;
 - * biological water quality of small rivers, 1993 - 1997.

2.2 ... and in future

LEDC plans to add the following information resources this year:

- water economical balance, 1997;
- digital maps:
 - * land cover map (according to CORINE Land Cover nomenclature);
 - * waste water outlets;
 - * water abstraction sites (partly);
 - * river drainage basins (large and medium basins).

2.3 Development campaign in Ministry

LEDC experts participate in the BALLERINA initiative since June, 1996 and have taken active campaign in the Ministry.

There are some achievements in the field of environmental information dissemination via Internet:

- the Ministry has accepted the Regulation "WWW Home Page development and publications via Internet" in August, 1997. LEDC co-ordinates web site development within the Regulation framework and offers LEDC web server space for WWW Home Page maintenance. 5 of 8 Regional Environment Boards (REB) have taken that opportunity and published their information in Latvian and partly in English for world wide access: <http://www.varam.vdc.lv/regioni.htm>. The process is still going on and it is planned that the rest of REB will provide the relevant information during 1998;
- Information Technology Board (ITB) was set up in October, 1997. ITB comprises one expert of each Department of the Ministry and its subordinated institutions except REBs. ITB main task is to co-ordinate all Information Technologies (IT) related projects within the Ministry and its subordinated institutions. ITB members:

- * accept/reject IT related working plan of institutions;
- * give references for IT projects;
- * acceptance of financial support to IT related activities.

2.4 Approach to information dissemination ...

LEDC uses different IT for information dissemination – mostly WWW server and GIS data bases.

2.4.1 ... via Internet...

LEDC in co-operation with Environment Consulting and Monitoring Centre has been prepared shortened version of the report “State of Environment in Latvia, 1996” in English. Now the report are available on LEDC web server: <http://www.vkmc.vdc.lv/soe96/>

“The Strategy of Information Development, 1997 – 2002”, accepted by the Ministry in January, 1998, is one of the latest documents relevant to all institutions of the Ministry and now available on LEDC Web site in Latvian: http://www.vdc.lv/dokument/varam_inf/saturs.htm

2.4.2 ... and on-line ...

The first attempt of on-line information access via Internet is LEDC test application in Latvian of the annual statistical data about emission into for the Ministry experts and other people with interests of environmental information. Water related data such as water receipts, drainage into

surface water bodies, pollution load for 1991 – 1996 also are presented as summaries on the LEDC Home Page: <http://www.vdc.lv/update/update.htm>.

The success of the first experiments will promote other data base on-line access and it is envisaged also to accomplish on-line access of most important environmental data bases in English later this year.

2.4.3 ... or via Intranet

LEDC as mentioned above co-ordinates EEA activities in Latvia. To be more precise: LEDC acts as National Focal Point of EEA and node point of the European Information and Observation Network (EIONET). LEDC provides the necessary information for “Dobriš+3” report since 1997 and will do it further. The most important and most recent event of this year is: the set up of EIONET server in Latvia under the guidance of EEA experts at the beginning of May. This is a new phase of capacity building for environmental information dissemination via Internet. The new EIONET node point server is located in LEDC and it supports the most updated Internet technologies and we can say that it “switches on the green light to environmental information exchange for all environmental experts in Latvia”. Now it became possible to connect to EIONET Intranet and both to receive and to supply objective, reliable and comprehensive environmental information used for EEA purposes. The next step will be establishing of public server until the end of this year.