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Sustainable Development

Introduction

Sustainable Development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs – in other words, a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It offers a vision of progress that integrates immediate and longer-term objectives, local and global action, and regards social, economic and environmental issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress.

Sustainable development will not be brought about by policies only: it must be taken up by society at large as a principle guiding the many choices each citizen makes every day, as well as the big political and economic decisions that have. This requires profound changes in thinking, in economic and social structures and in consumption and production patterns.

2009 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)

In July 2009 the Commission adopted the [2009 Review of EU SDS](#). It underlines that in recent years the EU has mainstreamed sustainable development into a broad range of its policies. In particular, the EU has taken the lead in the fight against climate change and the promotion of a low-carbon economy. At the same time, unsustainable trends persist in many areas and the efforts need to be intensified. The review takes stock of EU policy measures in the areas covered by the EU SDS and launches a reflection on the future of the EU SDS and its relation to the Lisbon strategy.

The review will be complemented by Eurostat's bi-annual monitoring report on sustainable development which will be published later in 2009.

Progress report

The European Commission adopted in October 2007 the [first progress report](#) on the Sustainable Development Strategy (complemented by a detailed [staff working paper](#)). According to the report, there have been significant policy developments in some of the seven key priorities identified in the revised SDS of 2006 - including climate and energy - but progress on policy has not yet translated into substantial concrete action.

Eurostat has in 2007 published a [monitoring report](#) based on an extended set of sustainable development indicators. This report was one of the inputs for the first progress report on the Sustainable Development Strategy.



The European Council in [December](#) 2007 welcomed the Commission Progress Report and insisted on the need to give priority to implementation measures: *"Sustainable development is a fundamental objective of the European Union. The European Council welcomes the Commission's first progress report on the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS). It agrees that the objectives and priorities under the seven key challenges contained in that strategy remain fully valid and that the main focus should therefore be on effective implementation at all levels. The renewed EU Strategy and national strategies for sustainable development also need to be linked up more closely. The governance structure and tools of the SDS, in particular in relation to monitoring of progress and best practice sharing, must be fully used and strengthened. The EU's integrated climate and energy policy and an integrated approach to the sustainable management of natural resources, the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services and sustainable production and consumption are among the drivers for achieving objectives under both the SDS and the Lisbon strategy. The EU must continue to work to move towards more sustainable transport and environmentally-friendly transport modes. The Commission is invited to present a roadmap together with its next Progress Report in June 2009 on the SDS setting out the remaining actions to be implemented with highest priority."*

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)

The European Council of June 2006 adopted an ambitious and comprehensive renewed [SDS for an enlarged EU](#). It builds on the [Gothenburg strategy of 2001](#) and is the result of an extensive review process that started in 2004.

The renewed EU SDS sets out a single, coherent strategy on how the EU will more effectively live up to its long-standing commitment to meet the challenges of sustainable development. It recognises the need to gradually change our current unsustainable consumption and production patterns and move towards a better integrated approach to policy-making. It reaffirms the need for global solidarity and recognises the importance of strengthening our work with partners outside the EU, including those rapidly developing countries which will have a significant impact on global sustainable development.

Outline

The overall aim of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve a continuous long-term improvement of quality of life through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently, able to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy and in the end able to ensure prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.



The strategy sets overall objectives and concrete actions for seven key priority challenges for the coming period until 2010, many of which are predominantly environmental:

- Climate change and clean energy
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable consumption & production
- Conservation and management of natural resources
- Public Health
- Social inclusion, demography and migration
- Global poverty and sustainable development challenges

To improve synergies and reduce trade-offs, a more integrated approach to policy making is proposed, based on better regulation ([impact assessments](#)) and on the [guiding principles for sustainable development](#) (adopted by the European Council of June 2005). The external dimension of sustainable development (e.g. global resource use, international development concerns) is factored into EU internal policy making and through integration of SD considerations in EU's external policies.

The EU SDS wants to be a strategy for the whole EU. It therefore proposes mechanisms for improving the coordination with other levels of governments and calls upon business, NGOs and citizens to become more involved in working for sustainable development. An example of this is the launch of a process for voluntary [peer reviews of national sustainable development strategies](#), aimed at improving the sharing of good practices.

Education, research and public finance are stressed as important instruments in facilitating the transition to a more sustainable production and consumption patterns. And because monitoring and follow-up are crucial for effective implementation, the renewed strategy contains a strong governance cycle. Every two years (started in 2007) the Commission is to produce a progress report on the implementation of the strategy. This report is to form the basis for discussion at the European Council, which will give guidance to the next steps in implementation.

First Steps

Already in 1997 sustainable development became a fundamental objective of the EU when it was included in the Treaty of Amsterdam as an overarching objective of EU policies.

At the Gothenburg Summit in June 2001, EU leaders launched the first EU sustainable development strategy based on a proposal from the European Commission. This 2001 strategy was composed of two main parts. The first proposed objectives and policy measures to tackle a number of key unsustainable trends while the second part, arguably more



ambitious, called for a new approach to policy-making that ensures the EU's economic, social and environmental policies mutually reinforce each other. The central instrument developed for this purpose was the obligation for the Commission to submit each new major policy proposal to an Impact Assessment.

The EU SDS added a third, environmental dimension to the Lisbon Strategy of economic and social renewal. The two strategies are complementary.

The Gothenburg declaration formed the core of the EU's policies towards sustainable development. But these also encompassed other programmes and commitments, such as the commitments made at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and the Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000, as well as global pledges to increase official development aid and to take account of the needs of developing countries in international trade.

Revision in 2006

Despite important achievements in implementing the [EU sustainable development strategy](#), unsustainable trends persist, ranging from climate change to the ageing of societies in developed countries and a widening gap between the rich and the poor in the world. The world surrounding the EU also changed significantly since 2001 with the enlargement of the European Union to 25 Member States, increased instability due to terrorist threats and violence, further globalization and changes in the world economy.

This required a sustainable development strategy with a stronger focus, a clearer division of responsibilities, wider ownership and broader support, a stronger integration of the international dimension and more effective implementation and monitoring.

After a broad **public consultation** from August till October 2004, in February 2005 the European Commission issued a Communication with [initial stock-taking and future orientations](#) for the review. Subsequently in June 2005 the European Council adopted a set of [guiding principles for sustainable development](#). In December 2005 the Commission presented a proposal for a [reviewed strategy and platform for further action](#). The Commission's proposal built on the 2001 strategy and advocated a shift in focus to take account of progress made, tackle shortcomings and take account of new challenges. The result was a renewed strategy adopted by Heads of State and Governments at the European Council of 15-16 June 2006.

Further information can be obtained at:

- European Commission's site on SD: <http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/>
- Eurostat Sustainable Development Indicators:
<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/sdi/introduction>
- Research for Sustainable Development: http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/index_en.cfm
- European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN): <http://www.sd-network.eu/>
- UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) [link:
http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_aboutcsd.shtml

Reference Documents

- Current Sustainable Development Strategy (2006): European Council [DOC 10917/06](#)
- [European Council conclusions](#) 14 December 2007 (§ 56)
- [2009 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy COM \(2009\) 400](#)
- First [Progress Report](#) (October 2007) + [Staff Working Paper](#)
- Eurostat 2007 [monitoring report](#)
- Publication of a [Handbook for the Peer Review of National Sustainable development Strategies](#)
- Commission Communication "[On the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy - A platform for action](#)" COM(2005) 658 final
- Commission Communication "[Draft Declaration on Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development](#)" COM(2005) 218 final, 25.5.2005
- Commission Communication "[The 2005 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: Initial Stocktaking and Future Orientations](#)" COM(2005) 37, 9.2.2005
- [The European Commission sets a positive agenda for the 2005 review of the Sustainable Development Strategy](#) (press release IP/05/156 of 09/02/2005)
- Commission Communication "[The World Summit on Sustainable Development one year on: implementing our commitments](#)" COM(2003) 829 final
- Commission Communication "[Towards a global partnership for Sustainable Development](#)" COM(2002) 82 final, adding a global dimension to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy
- Commission Communication "[A sustainable Europe for a better world: A European strategy for Sustainable Development](#)" COM(2001) 264 final
- [Commission proposes bold EU strategy for sustainable development](#) (press release IP/01/710 of 16/05/2001)

Global level

- [Executive Summary Brundtland-Report "Our Common Future" \(1987\)](#).
(For the usually quoted definition see [chapter 2, paragraph 1](#))
- [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development](#) (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992): Rio-Declaration, Agenda 21 and other documents
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002):
[Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development](#) and [Johannesburg Plan of Implementation](#)

National level

- [ESDN site on national SD strategies](#)
- [UN CSD site on national SD strategies](#)