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ESDN Quarterly Report September 2008

Participatory Mechanisms in the Development, Implementation and Review of National Sustainable Development Strategies

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This ESDN Quarterly Report (QR) focuses on participatory mechanisms in the development, implementation and review of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs). Generally, public participation is one of the key elements of NSDS processes as it builds a basis for involving various stakeholder groups and aims to link top-down and bottom-up approaches. Viewed from a 'new governance' perspective on policy-making, participatory mechanisms are crucial for multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral settings of collaboration to successfully address the challenges of sustainable development (SD). However, practical experiences show that establishing meaningful and effective exchange mechanisms between different stakeholders remains a challenge that needs to be addressed more systematically.

This QR attempts to provide an overview of various aspects of participation in policy-making in general and its application in NSDS processes in particular. After a general introduction on public participation in policy-making and SD strategy processes, the QR includes several empirical findings on public participation in NSDS processes. In order to demonstrate how participatory mechanisms are applied in practice in NSDS processes, the QR includes three case studies of experiences made in Austria, Finland and the UK.

The empirical findings and the case studies are partly based on a research project on participatory mechanisms in NSDS processes that is commissioned by the [German Environment Agency \(UBA\)](#) and the [German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety](#) and conducted by [Ecologic](#) and [RIMAS](#). The project started in December 2007 and will be finished in late 2008 with a final project report.

In April 2008, an ESDN workshop on the same topic was organised in Berlin. A full documentation of the workshop, including the workshop report, can be found on the [ESDN homepage](#).

Acknowledgements

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Public participation in policy-making processes

This chapter outlines public participation in policy-making processes: Firstly, it reflects upon general developments and changes in policy-making. Secondly, it provides a definition and an overview of general principles of public participation. Thirdly, it describes different characteristics and application practices of public participation in the policy process. And finally, it lists benefits and limits of public participation.

Developments in policy-making

The policy-making mechanisms and administrative practices have changed considerably over the last decades. Overall, one can distinguish three dominant models that demonstrate this development and are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Changes in policy-making mechanisms and administrative practice (Steurer, 2007, p. 208)

	Bureaucracy	New public management	New governance
<i>Peak of popularity</i>	1920s-1970s	1980s-1990s	Mid 1990s-today
<i>Overall approach</i>	'Bureaucratism'	'Managerialism'	'Governance'
<i>Guiding principle</i>	Accountability	Efficiency	Effectiveness
<i>Governance mode</i>	Hierarchy	Market	Network
<i>Governance mechanism</i>	Command and control	Competition	Co-operation/ collaboration
<i>Compliance/ ownership</i>	Control/enforcement	Incentives	Involvement, negotiation mechanism and persuasion

As Table 1 shows, current policy-making and administrative practices can be subsumed under the 'new governance' model. In this model, public participation and cooperation play an increasingly important role. Below, some of the main features of 'new governance' are outlined:

1. 'Soft policy instruments' accompany 'command and control' mechanisms: In the 'new governance' approach informational or endorsing instruments (e.g. campaigns, guidelines, trainings), partnering instruments (e.g. agreements, networks, PPPs, dialogues), financial/economic instruments (e.g. subsidies, prizes/awards, grants), legal/mandating instruments (e.g. laws, regulations, decrees) and 'hybrid instruments' (e.g. strategies, action plans, platforms, centres) are increasingly used and accompany traditional command and control mechanisms. (See also the [ESDN Quarterly Report June 2008](#)).
2. Horizontal integration and public participation: Involvement of various actors of society or stakeholders of public policies in the development, implementation and review of policies, strategies, programmes, etc, in a cross-sectoral and inter-disciplinary approach (also referred to as 'network governance').
3. Vertical integration and cooperation of different policy levels: For the successful implementation of policies, the cooperation of various political levels is crucial, i.e. European, national, regional and local actors need to engage in a coordinated process (also referred to as 'multi-level governance').

In highlighting the second feature on public participation, some scholars argue that 'new governance' "(...) demands the

consent and participation of the governed” (Hemmati et al., 2001, 41). Public participation is, therefore, one of the key principles of new governance. Moreover, public participation becomes vital in the development and implementation of various strategies and key policy documents at the EU level (e.g. renewed EU SDS), the national level (e.g. national SD strategies) and the sub-national levels (e.g. regional SD strategies, Local Agenda 21 initiatives) to successfully tackle cross-sectoral challenges together with a variety of stakeholders.

Defining public participation

Generally, it is difficult to present a useful and generally accepted definition of participation, particularly in the context of SD. Many approaches exist at various levels with the involvement of different stakeholder groups (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002). Therefore, we offer a broad definition as a starting point:

Participation refers to the inclusion of public stakeholders, i.e. all or a selection of those institutions and actors (e.g. civil society organisations/NGOs, business representatives, social partners, sub-national authorities, individual citizens, etc) that can affect or are affected by the results of policy- and decision-making processes.

General principles of public participation

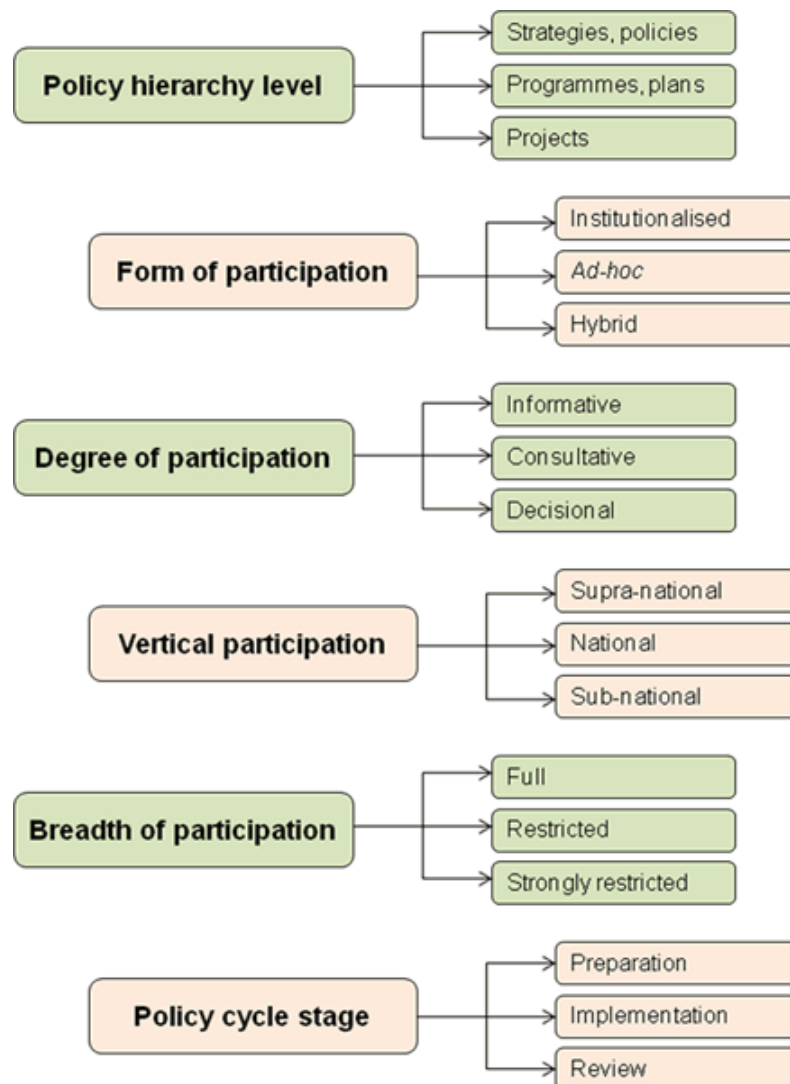
Public participation rests on a number of key principles that are listed below (Arbter et al, 2007; Duraiappah *et al.*, 2005; Egger & Majeres, 1992):

- **Inclusion** of citizens or representatives of societal groups (stakeholders) who are affected by the results of a decision or a process.
- **Equal Partnership:** It should be recognised that every citizens and/or stakeholder representative has skill, ability and initiative and has equal rights to participate in the process regardless of their status.
- **Increasing knowledge:** Stakeholders possess different kinds of ‘knowledge’ (e.g. expert, regional/local or context-specific knowledge) that can increase the understanding of certain issues for all parties involved in the participatory process and thus is important for policy/strategy formulation.
- **Transparency:** All participants should contribute to create a climate of mutual trust, open communication and fair dialogue.
- **Access to information:** It should be guaranteed that all participants have access to relevant information and documents in the participatory process.
- **Ownership:** Involving stakeholders and citizens in participatory processes can increase their ‘ownership’ of the outcomes of participation. Increasing ‘ownership’ is particularly important for ‘later stages’ in the policy-making process, i.e. implementation.
- **Sharing responsibility:** In the participatory process, each stakeholder should be provided with clear responsibilities within each process and all stakeholders should have equal responsibility for decisions made in the respective participatory process. This, however, must not be confounded with ‘accountability’ of political decisions which, in a representative democracy, lie with elected political representatives.
- **Empowerment:** Generally, it should be clear from the beginning of the participatory process how much influence the participants have and what will be done with the results. Participants with special skills should be encouraged to take responsibility for tasks within their area of expertise.
- **Process design:** Meaningful participation takes time. Therefore, the process design of participatory processes should take into account the duration of the participation and the resources required by all participants (e.g. personnel, time, budget, etc).
- **Integrating in existing decision procedures:** Participatory processes in a representative democracy should be linked with existing decision procedures in order to clarify their role and status in the entire decision-making process.

Characteristics and application practices of public participation in the policy process

The general principles outlined above can have different characteristics and application practices in the policy process, depending on (i) participation applied in the different policy hierarchy levels, (ii) the different forms of participation, (iii) the degree of participation, (iv) participation at the different political levels (vertical participation), (v) the breadth of participation and (vi) the participation at different stages of the policy cycle. Figure 1 shows the different characteristics and application practices of participation which are described in more detail below:

Figure 1: Characteristics and application practices of participation in the policy process (© Zwirner & Berger, 2008)



(i) Policy hierarchy level

Participatory mechanisms can be applied at **different policy hierarchies**. Firstly, on the highest level in the development and/or implementation of policies, strategies, overall concepts, etc. which outline general objectives and policy goals. Secondly, participation can take place in the development/implementation of plans and programmes that define objectives and targets in specific policy fields. And thirdly, participation can take place in projects that have a clearly defined scope and specific running time.

(ii) Different forms of participation

Depending on the scope and objective of participation, there are different forms of participation processes. One can distinguish between, on the one hand, **ad-hoc forms** that are organised once for a specific purpose like, e.g. internet consultations, web-based debates, workshops, public hearings, conferences, presentations, round tables and dialogues, etc. On the other hand, participation can be organised in **institutionalised forms** like, e.g. partnerships, councils, committees, advisory groups, etc. Institutionalised forms of participation can be regarded in most cases as symmetric and reciprocal 'stakeholder participation', whereas ad-hoc forms are more often characterised by a knowledge gathering in the form of 'public consultation'. In practice, one can observe that institutionalised and ad-hoc forms of participation often complement each other. These **'hybrid forms'** of participation exist in most EU Member States where, for instance, councils or committees (e.g. national SD councils) are supported by ad-hoc participation (e.g. forums, workshops and conferences addressing specific topics of SD).

(iii) Degree of participation

One can also distinguish participation mechanisms regarding the intensity with which stakeholder are involved. Several scholars have defined ways how to analyse this 'degree of participation'. For instance, Bass *et al.* (1995) developed six degrees of participation that are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: A typology of participation in policy processes and planning from Bass et al. (1995)

- 1 Participants listening only - e.g. receiving information from a government PR campaign or open database.
- 2 Participants listening and giving information - e.g. through public inquiries, media activities, "hotlines".
- 3 Participants being consulted - e.g. through working groups and meetings held to discuss policy.
- 4 Participation in analysis and agenda-setting - e.g. through multi-stakeholder groups, round tables and commissions.
- 5 Participation in reaching consensus on the main strategy elements - e.g. through national round tables, parliamentary/select committees, and conflict mediation.
- 6 Participants involved in decision-making on the policy, strategy or its components.

Another typology by Green & Hunton-Clarke (2003), originally developed for corporate participatory efforts, distinguishes between informative, consultative and decisional participation:

- **Informative participation** describes processes that involve information being passed from one body to another. On the one hand, this includes the distribution of information from the central institution(s) to the stakeholders (e.g. websites, online reports, brochures etc) in a one-way communication. On the other hand, it also includes processes with a two-way information exchange between the central institution(s) and the stakeholders (e.g. during information events, campaigns, etc).
- **Consultative participation** refers to a higher-level of exchange between the central institution(s) and the stakeholders. At this level, the stakeholders are asked to contribute their views, knowledge and experiences at various stages of the policy process. Examples are consultation processes, round tables, dialogue forums, workshops, national SD councils, partnerships, etc. This form of participation not only comprises a stronger involvement of stakeholders, but also refers to issues like commitment in the process, resources applied, capacity-building, etc.
- **Decisional participation** describes mechanisms in which stakeholders participate in the decision-making process. This includes participation in actual political decision-making or in the preparation of political decisions. Examples are some national SD councils, sectoral policy dialogues, decisions on indicator sets, etc.

Since the categories of Green & Hunton-Clarke (2003) do not overlap precisely with those of Bass *et al.* (1995), in Table 3 we provide a comparison of these two classifications.¹

Table 3: Comparing typologies of degree of participation

Bass <i>et al.</i> (1995)	Green & Hunton-Clarke (2003)
Participants listening only	Informative participation
Participants listening and giving information	
Participants being consulted	Consultative participation
Participation in analysis and agenda-setting	
Participation in reaching consensus on the main strategy elements	Decisional participation
Participants involved in decision-making on the policy, strategy or its components	

(iv) Vertical participation

Participation takes place at **different political levels**, i.e. on the supra-national (EU), national, regional and/or local level. Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002) argue that in participatory processes at the supra-national and/or nation level, participation is often restricted to traditional stakeholder groups and 'classic' participatory mechanisms. In contrast, participation on the sub-national levels is often more interactive and innovative. Moreover, the motivation for stakeholder participation at the sub-national levels can be fostered by direct regional/local concern and experiences. The links between top-down and bottom-up dynamics in participation and the fostering of decentralised mechanisms as well as vertical integration itself are some of the main challenges of designing participatory processes.

(v) Breadth of participation (or horizontal participation)

This refers to the number of stakeholders involved in a participatory mechanism, i.e. how diverse and cross-boundary (e.g. cross-sectoral, inter-disciplinary, etc.) the set of involved stakeholders is. Based on Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002), one can distinguish between:

- **Full participation:** All major sectors of society are involved, including individual citizens. Moreover, representatives of at least two political levels take part in the participation. There should be no administrative or technical restrictions in place (e.g. access to information, need of special technical equipment, etc).
- **Restricted participation:** Only some sectors of society are involved; individual citizens are not involved in participation. In most cases, not more than two political levels are involved. Administrative or technical restrictions can be in place. The central institution(s) define general terms for participation, including selection criteria.
- **Strongly restricted participation:** Only a selected few sectors of society are involved; individual citizens are not

involved in participation. Not more than two political levels are involved. Administrative or technical restrictions are in place. The central institution(s) define clear terms for participation, including strong selection criteria.

(vi) Participation at different stages of the policy cycle

This characteristic refers to the three common stages of the policy cycle, i.e. participation in the **preparation**, **implementation**, and **review** of policies, strategies, programmes etc. Preparation refers to the drafting process of policies, strategies and programmes; implementation refers to those participatory mechanisms that are in direct relation to the implementation of policy or strategy objectives and the outcomes of those initiatives; and review refers to evaluating and monitoring the progress in achieving the objectives as well as to the further development of a policy, strategy, programme, etc.

Benefits of public participation

Participatory processes can yield a number of benefits for the different stakeholders involved. Generally, these processes bring together people with different interests, views and ideas, who might otherwise have not cooperated. As they express their various perspectives, needs and experiences, a common pool of knowledge about the different aspects of a policy, strategy, plan, programme or project is developed. The subsequent political decision process can then take this knowledge and the gathered ideas into account. The benefits of public participation processes differ regarding the involved stakeholders (Arbter et al, 2007):

- **Politicians** may acquire a clearer picture of the needs of different stakeholder groups and citizens. Participatory processes can render it easier to accommodate conflicting interests and promote the culture of collaboration and dialogue.
- **Public administrators** can benefit from stakeholder participation because issues have been discussed and worked out in cooperation with stakeholders. Therefore, administrators are less likely to be confronted with objections and subsequent complaints in the policy or strategy process. Moreover, participation may play an important part in increasing stakeholders' trust in the administration.
- **Business representatives** may benefit from bringing in their perspectives in the participatory process and, thereby, influencing the development of policies and strategies. Moreover, they are informed about future developments earlier and this may influence their business strategy and future activities.
- **Citizens** have the chance to present their ideas, views and thoughts about a policy issue, strategy or project. They also gain up-to-date information and insights into how decisions are reached.

Limits and costs of public participation

Although there are many benefits of participatory processes, practical experiences show and research reveals (Steurer 2007) that establishing meaningful and effective exchange mechanisms between different stakeholders remains a challenge. Below we list some limits and costs of participatory processes and how they could be addressed (Arbter et al, 2007; Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002; UNEP, 2002):

- **Creation of unrealistic expectations:** To avoid this, the purpose and form of participation should be openly communicated in advance and it should be made clear that compromises are necessary in a process where conflicting opinions and interests meet.
- **Topics are too technical:** This is a risk stemming from omissions in the planning of participation. Obviously, special care needs to be taken to 'translate' a given problem into plain language and to provide participants the information they need to successfully participate.
- **Costs of resources, time and money:** Transaction costs of developing and maintaining institutional mechanisms for public participation, conflict resolution, time spent in meetings, costs for catering, transport and accommodation, etc, need to be taken into account.
- **Stakeholder selection and legitimisation of stakeholder groups:** This is one of the most sensitive elements of a participatory process. An open, transparent and profound stakeholder selection is necessary for successful outcomes.
- **Takeover of the process by dominant participants:** Careful design of public participation should ensure that participation is balanced, that all sides of the debate are heard.
- **Report on the outcomes of participatory processes:** Transparent and open public participation should also include a report about how the results of the participatory process have been used and an explanation when results were not used. This will potentially increase efforts and costs, however, will contribute to the traceability of outcomes and trust of stakeholders involved.

Public participation in SD strategy processes

Agenda 21, the Action Programme adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio 1992, includes a major reference to public participation in the context of SD (UNCED, 1992, para 23.2):

“One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making. Furthermore, in the more specific context of environment and development, the need for new forms of participation has emerged. This includes the need of individuals, groups and organizations to participate in environmental impact assessment procedures and to know about and participate in decisions, particularly those which potentially affect the communities in which they live and work. Individuals, groups and organizations should have access to information relevant to environment and development held by national authorities, including information on products and activities that have or are likely to have a significant impact on the environment, and information on environmental protection measures.”

During the decade following the adoption of Agenda 21, the principle of public participation has been implemented into many processes of international SD governance, especially the UN system (i.e. the work of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Habitat and UNAIDS programmes). Generally, public participation is identified as an objective in its own right and a fundamental equity principle of SD (UN, 2002). Some would even claim that SD without participation does not qualify as a true SD process.

Therefore, participation is also a **key element of SD strategy processes** and has been addressed at various levels. For instance, Agenda 21 outlines that National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) “should be developed through the widest possible participation” (UNCED, 1992, para 8.7). Thus, public participation is included as an important element in UN and OECD guidance documents for preparing NSDS (UN, 2002; OECD, 2001).

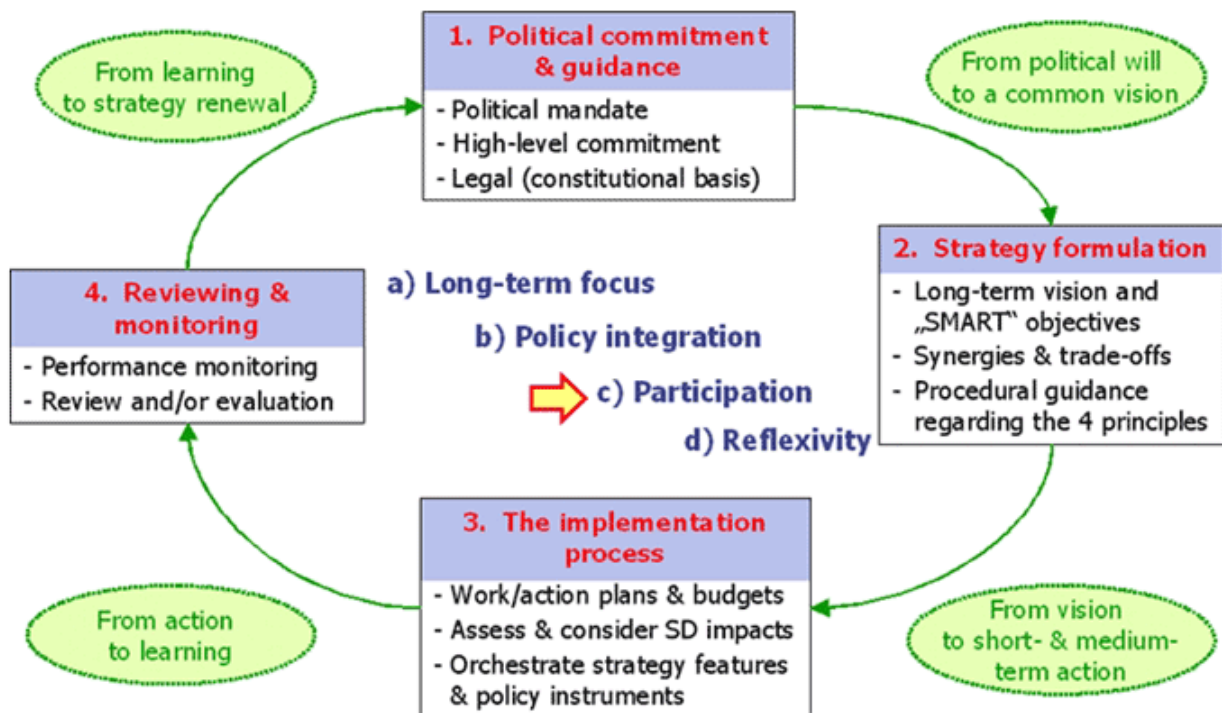
Furthermore, participation is addressed by several of the policy guiding principles in the renewed EU SDS:

- *Open and democratic society*: “Guarantee citizens’ rights of access to information and ensure access to justice. Develop adequate consultation and participatory channels for all interested parties and associations” (European Council, 2006, 4).
- *Involvement of citizens*: “Enhance the participation of citizens in decision-making. Promote their education and public awareness of sustainable development. Inform citizens about their impact on the environment and their options for making more sustainable choices” (European Council, 2006, 5).
- *Policy coherence and governance*: “Promote the coherence between all European Union policies and coherence between local, regional, national and global actions in order to enhance their contribution to sustainable development” (European Council, 2006, 5).

Finally, participatory tools and mechanisms can be found in the preparation, implementation and of NSDSs in most EU Member States.

Generally, participation forms an integral part and constitutes an important principle of the SD strategy cycle (see also [ESDN Quarterly Report, December 2007](#)):

Figure 2: The SD strategy cycle - principles (a-d) and steps (1-4) (© Steurer 2007, loosely based on Volkery et al. 2006)



Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002) provide several arguments why public participation is important in the development and implementation of NSDSs:

- **SD is a complex issue with various factors and affects the whole population:** A multidisciplinary approach is necessary to tackle the basic purposes of NSDSs as to integrate social, economic and environmental aspects. The knowledge of different actors of society is necessary to take into consideration for effective implementation.
- **New governance and strategic public management are the new paradigms in policy-making:** This requires cooperation, learning, interdisciplinary knowledge gathering and inclusive cooperation with participation linking 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes.
- **Each of the elements of the 'SD triad' brings its own strengths into joint-actions:** The public sector is 'rights-driven' and provides stability and legitimacy; the private sector is 'profit-driven' and is inventive, single-minded and fast; and the civil society is 'value-driven' and is responsive, inclusive and imaginative.
- **SD strategies need 'value judgements'** which cannot be made by governments alone and can effectively be made and legitimised only through a social and mutual process bringing together all affected stakeholders to facilitate acceptance and ownership and to maintain NSDSs as 'alive processes' instead of 'dead paper'.
- **Participation in decision-making can bring better results:** This is more challenging to authorities than mere consultation, but "state-dominated policy and legislation for central control needs to give way to subtler mixes with enabling legislation and civil society and private sector checks and balances" (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002, 189). Therefore, NSDSs should be developed as continuous (cyclical) learning processes, which build and improve systems for multi-stakeholder participation.

Conditions for successful participatory mechanisms in NSDS processes

The OECD guidelines (OECD, 2001, 29) and Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002, 193) define several conditions for successful participation in developing and implementing SD strategies:

- **Agreed principles of participation:** The principles need to be subject to early discussions, based on previous experiences and existing strategies. These principles usually comprise issues like diversity, representation, transparency, learning, equity, inclusiveness and time schedule. (see also section on '[general principles of public participation](#)' above)
- **Proper selection of stakeholders** – all those with a legitimate interest in the strategy and its results. In this context, it is important to clarify the number of stakeholders that should be involved in the participatory process and their concrete roles (see also section on '[breadth of participation](#)' above).
- **Catalysts for participation:** NGOs, business associations, sub-national authorities, etc. in order to start the

participation and to link the decisions to be taken centrally with those at the appropriate levels.

- *Phased approach*: It is important to design the participatory process in various phases, like: (i) Initiation phase - design of concept and framework conditions for participation, (ii) preparation phase - definition of objectives and process, organisational aspects (budget, time schedule, technical equipment, venue, etc), and (iii) implementation phase - responsibility of participants, rules of the process, presentation and implementation of results.
- *Specific activities or events*: This refers to the different types of participation or participatory mechanisms, e.g. internet consultation, workshops, round tables, committees, advisory groups, etc.
- *Adequate resources, skills and time*: Effective participation involves a number of crucial aspects like, e.g. managing, hosting and moderating the process; access to information (sufficient, relevant information in a form that is easily understood by non-experts); capacities; budget for process and participants, time schedule, etc.
- *Learning environment*: Institutions and mechanisms that encourage, support, manage and reward participation in the development and implementation stage. Allow enough time for stakeholders to review, consider and respond to the information and its implications and provide appropriate means and opportunities for stakeholders to express their views.
- *Venues and times of events suitable for stakeholders*: Select venues and time of events to encourage maximum attendance and a free exchange of views by all stakeholders.
- *Implementation of and information about results*: Stakeholders who participate need to know how their contributions, time and resources will impact and have been impacting on decisions, policy processes and strategies. Feed back the results of public input: respond to all questions, issues raised or comments made by stakeholders. This fosters public confidence and trust in the evaluation.

The major objectives and benefits of applying participatory mechanisms in NSDS processes have also been discussed by the participants of the ESDN workshop in Berlin in April 2008. Results of the discussion can be found in the [workshop report](#).

In the following chapters, the QR presents some empirical findings on public participation in NSDS processes in selected countries. This is followed by case studies which describe participatory mechanisms in NSDS processes in more detail.

Empirical findings of public participation in NSDS processes

In this chapter, empirical findings of participation in NSDS development, implementation and review in EU Member States and selected other countries are presented with regard to several of the main characteristics and application practices of public participation (see section on '[characteristics and application practices](#)').

Forms of participation in NSDS processes

General, one can distinguish between institutionalised and ad-hoc forms of participation. The most common form of **institutionalised participatory arrangements in NSDS processes** are national SD councils/commissions for SD: As of 2008, 21 EU Member States have established a national SD council/commission. These councils/commissions usually have an advisory role for the governments in the preparation and/or implementation of the NSDS and facilitate the exchange of experiences between government representatives and various stakeholder groups, like businesses (chambers of commerce, business associations), NGOs, academia, sub-national levels, trade unions, civil society organisations, indigenous groups etc. Examples are:

- Estonian Commission on SD: This advisory body to the government on issues related to SD is composed of 28 experts, including representatives from government (5), parliament (5), governmental institutions (5), academia (9), business community (1) and NGOs (2).
- National Council for SD in France: The Council advises the government on the implementation of SD policies and consists of 90 members from local authorities, business, trade unions, environmental NGOs, social and consumer associations, and academia.
- National SD Partnership "Comhar" in Ireland: This consultation and dialogue forum is made up of 25 members coming from government, economic sector, environmental NGOs, social/community NGOs and academia.
- The Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development (FNCSO) which comprises about 45 regular members, reflecting the most relevant stakeholders of society. The FNCSO and its role in preparing the renewed Finnish NSDS will be described in the [case study on Finland](#) below.

- SD Commission in the UK: The SD Commission is, on the one hand, an advisory body for the government and is composed of 22 persons coming from the business sector, NGOs, devolved administrations and academia. On the other hand, the SD Commission has taken on a 'watchdog' role, reporting to the Prime Minister about progress in NSDS implementation.

Several Member States have organised **ad-hoc participatory arrangements for NSDS implementation**, e.g. dialogue forums, general consultation processes (in written form via mail or email), workshops, (expert) interviews, focus-groups, round table discussions, open houses, seminars, partnerships, advisory panels or conferences. Examples are:

- Austria: The national government frequently organises various interactive dialogue forums with stakeholders in the form of workshops and round table discussions.
- Czech Republic: The Government Council for SD organises thematic workshops, discussion forums, email-base discussion, etc. The Council also organises the annual SD Forum which aims to facilitate broad public discussions and access for the public to information on SD topics.
- Denmark: The government has established several partnerships and dialogues with important stakeholder groups, e.g. local authorities and businesses.
- France: A country-wide stakeholder consultation process for the revision of the French NSDS was organised between September 2007 and spring 2008: "Gronelle de l'environnement" involved more than 800 representatives of various stakeholder groups.
- Spain: The 'Conference on SD' was organised during the preparation of the Spanish NSDS. The conference took place on three days on July 2007 as part of the activities of CAMA (Environmental Advisory Council), which itself comprises of 18 civil society organisations, and brought together a large number of participants from various stakeholder groups.

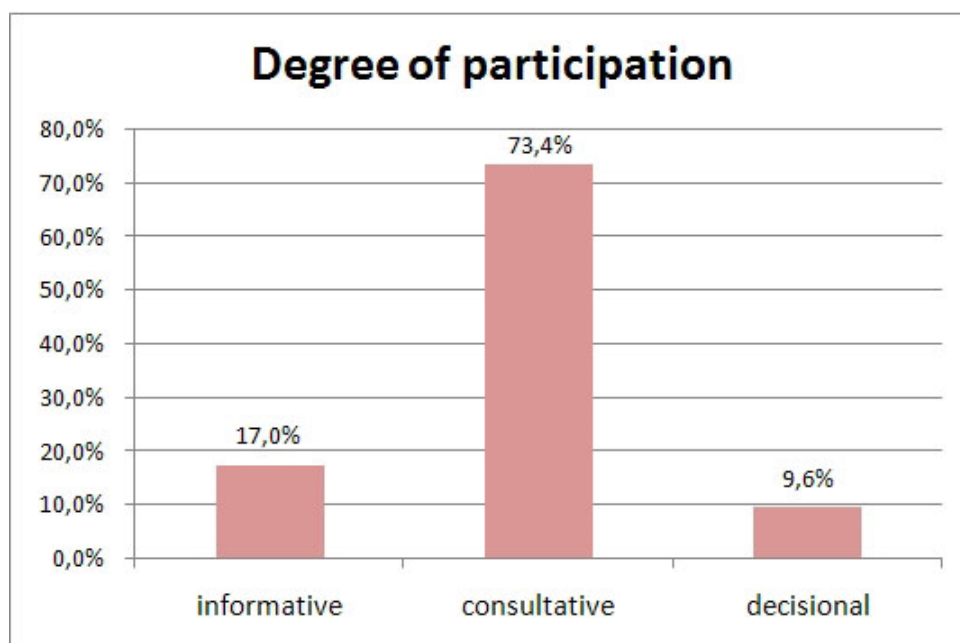
In most EU Member States, hybrid forms which link institutionalised and ad-hoc forms of participation can be found, e.g. national SD councils exist beside forums, workshops, round tables, etc.

Degree of participation

The intensity with which stakeholders are involved in NSDS processes differs. Various degrees of participation can be detected. The most useful typology for degrees of participation is the one by Green & Hunton-Clark (2003) who distinguish between **informative, consultative and decisional participation** (see section on [degree of participation](#) above).

In a current research project commissioned by the German Environment Agency and the German Ministry of Environment, public participation in NSDS processes of 12 countries were analysed.² In total, 94 participatory mechanisms were found in these countries that differ in the degree of participation.

Figure 3: Degree of participation in participatory mechanisms of NSDS processes



As Figure 3 shows, consultative forms of participation are applied in a majority of the mechanisms (73.4 %). Informative

participation is used in 17 % and decisional participation in 9.6 % of the cases.

Breadth of participation (horizontal participation)

Breadth of participation or ‘horizontal participation’ refers to the different stakeholders involved in a participatory mechanism, also in order to ensure that issues are dealt with across sectors. Following the categorisation of Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002), one can distinguish between **full**, **restricted** and **strongly restricted participation** (see also section on ‘breadth of participation’ above). The analysis of the 94 participatory mechanisms in the 12 countries in terms of breadth of participation brought the following result:

Figure 4: Breadth of participation in participatory mechanisms of NSDS processes

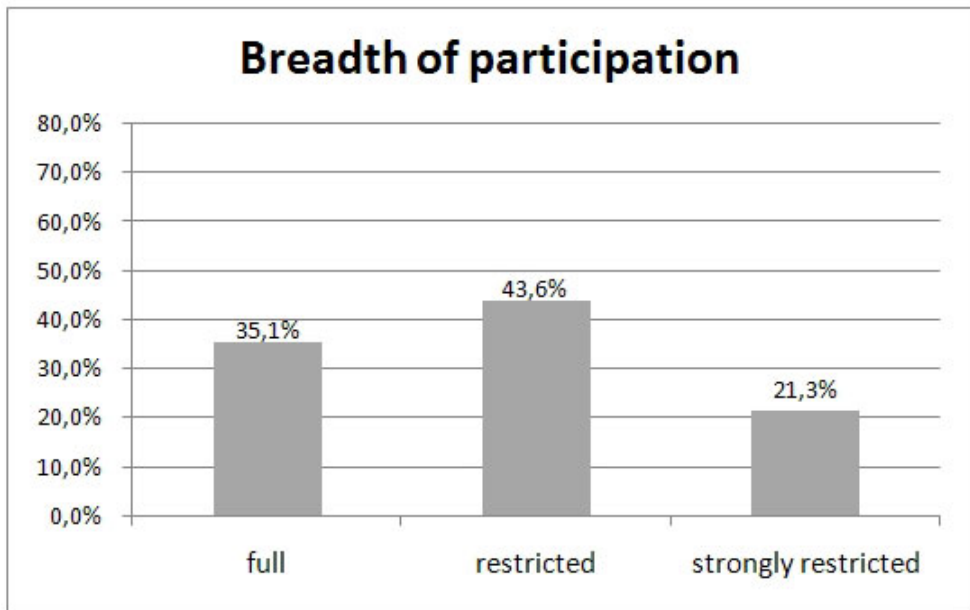


Figure 4 shows that 43.6 % of the participatory mechanisms are characterised by restricted participation, 35.1 % by full participation and 21.3 % by strongly restricted participation.

Stakeholder involvement refers to the interactions between representatives from political levels, policy sectors, interest groups and civil society. Depending on the scope and objective of participation, different stakeholder groups are involved and stakeholder selection as such must be seen as one of the most critical moments in designing participatory processes. Results of the analysis of different participatory mechanisms in the 12 selected countries show the range and probability of stakeholder groups involved in different participation mechanisms of NSDS processes.

Figure 5: Involvement of stakeholder groups in participatory mechanisms of NSDS processes

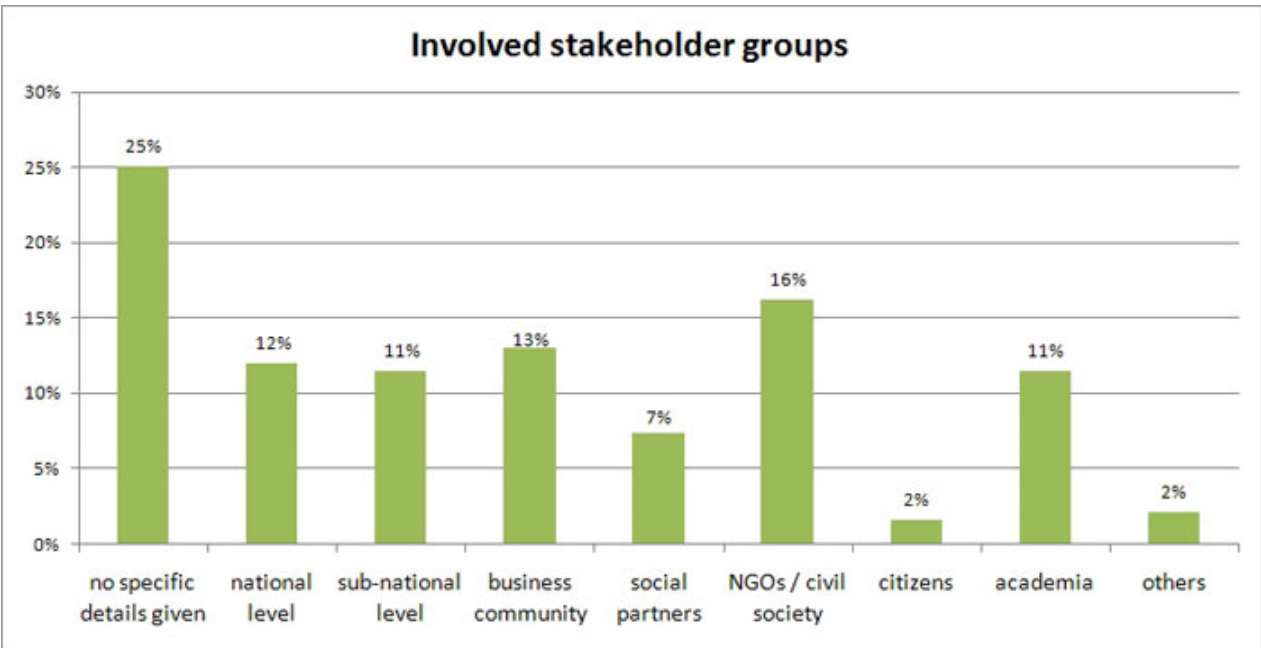


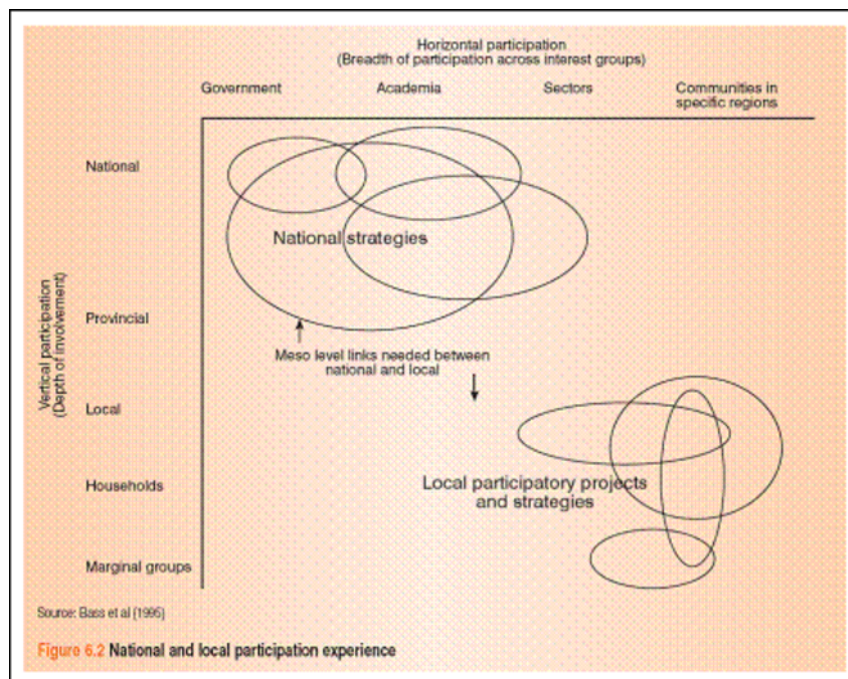
Figure 5 shows that from 94 participatory mechanisms described, 25 % provide no specific information on the involved stakeholder groups. In these cases, the information given was either too generic ("... a broad range of stakeholders was involved") or not available. An aggregated look at the involvement of the various stakeholder groups provides the following overview: 16 % NGOs (environmental and social NGOs) and civil society organisation (e.g. youth groups, indigenous communities), 13 % representatives from the business community, 12 % representatives from the national level (excluding those institutions that organised the participatory process) and 11 % representatives from the sub-national levels (regional and local authorities) and academia (universities). Social partners (trade unions, business associates and chamber of commerce) were involved in 7 % of the cases and individual citizens were only marginally involved (2 %).

Vertical participation

Participation takes place at **different political levels**. In the context of NSDSs, most EU Member States involve several stakeholder groups in the preparation of the strategy document at the national level. Usually taking the form of a 'public consultation' process, the stakeholders can either submit comments to the draft NSDS or are invited to attend preparatory workshops, round tables, conferences, etc. In a majority of cases, only institutionalised stakeholders (e.g. business associations, trade unions, NGOs, researchers, etc) participate in the NSDS preparation process (this also holds true for NSDS implementation). Although NSDS processes mainly refer to the national level, several participatory mechanisms are applied on the sub-national levels which are related to the NSDS process. For instance, various stakeholders participate in regional round tables (e.g. UK, Czech Republic) and LA 21 initiatives generally focus on broad citizen participation. As the discussions at the ESDN workshop in Berlin revealed, the objective to link top-down and bottom-up dynamics is a major challenge for participation in NSDS processes (see also the UK case study below).

The relationships between horizontal and vertical participation can be captured in a 'map' of (national) participatory experiences. An example is provided in Figure 6, with ellipses representing individual instances of participation or participatory mechanisms.

Figure 6: Map of participatory mechanisms (Source: Bass et al., 1995 in Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002).



Case studies on participatory mechanisms in NSDS processes

To gain greater insight into the practice of participatory mechanisms used during NSDS development, implementation or review, this chapter includes three case studies. The case studies stem from a project currently conducted by Ecologic and RIMAS for the German Environment Agency and the German Ministry of Environment: (1) Stakeholder participation in the development of the Austrian SD indicator set; (2) participation in the development of the renewed NSDS by the Finnish Sustainable Development Strategy Group, and (c) participation in the NSDS revision process in the UK.³

Stakeholder participation in the development of the Austrian SD indicator set

Background and facts

The [Austrian NSDS](#) was adopted by the Austrian Federal Government in April 2002 and includes the objective to develop an SD indicator set for Austria. The indicator set should be developed in a systematic way by using participatory mechanisms. In September 2003, the workshop, "Monitoring of SD in Austria: A systematic approach and topics", laid the foundation for the process of defining key objectives and indicators for SD of Austria.

Time frame:	Summer 2003 - Summer 2006
Type:	Development of Austrian SD indicator set (part of the NSDS and the monitoring report)
Responsibility:	Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Environment (BMLFUW)
Stakeholders involved:	Stakeholder groups and experts dealing with SD
Participatory mechanisms:	Workshops, written feedback round, consultation of experts

Characteristics application practices of public participation:

Policy hierarchy level	Policies and strategies
Form of participation	Ad-hoc
Degree of participation	Decisional
Breadth of participation	Restricted to invited stakeholders
Vertical participation	National level
Policy cycle stage	Review

Description of participatory process and mechanisms used

The development of SD indicators in Austria was strongly focused on broad stakeholder involvement with the aim to create acceptance and commitment and to utilize the knowledge of all involved actors. The indicator development process was designed as a project within the department of SD and environmental subsidies of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Environment (BMLFUW). A core project team was established that consisted of administrators of the BMLFUW and several scientific advisors. After the project preparation phase, stakeholder involvement started with an initial workshop to decide upon the future working group structure and the theoretical model on which to base the SD indicators. After a phase of literature research, a written feedback round and interviews with scientists, key objectives for SD were summarised for discussion with selected experts. In the two concluding workshops, stakeholders were asked to extract indicators for the corresponding SD topics and its key objectives. Figure 7 below shows the various steps of the participatory process and the actors involved; the steps in green show the work undertaken by the core project team and the steps in blue refer to the participation of external stakeholders (i.e. experts, scientists, and other stakeholder groups):

Figure 7: Steps of the participation process for developing the Austrian SD indicators set

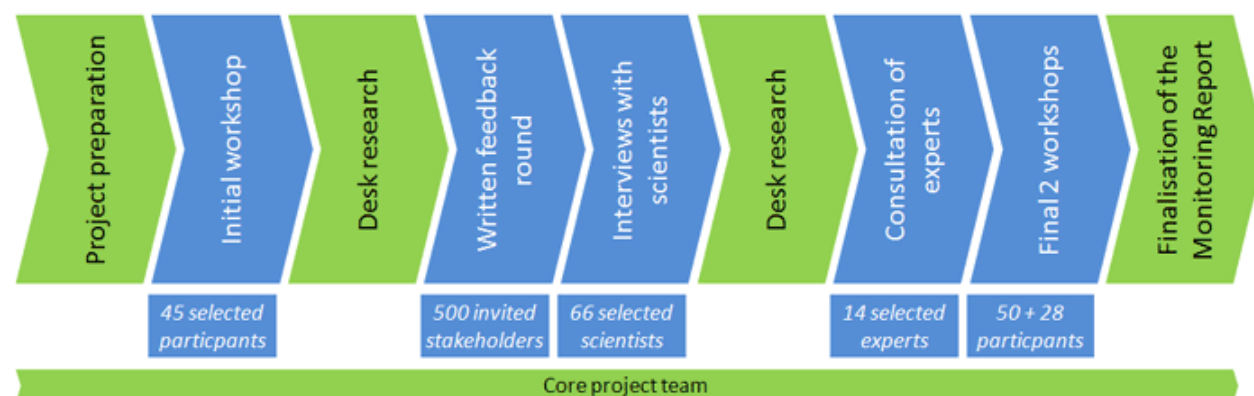


Table 4 below specifies the participatory process concerning actions, involved actors and stakeholders and results:

Table 4: Steps of the participatory process, including stakeholders and results

Action	Involved actors and stakeholders	Results
Project preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core team: BMLFUW + contracting scientific advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of the core project team Exploration of theoretical models

1	Initial workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open invitation (invited persons could invite other persons) • 45 participants (primarily from public institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of the structure, i.e. relevant SD topics • Decision to focus on the sphere “man/society” • Formation of working groups
2	Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core team + other ministries to provide relevant documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of key objectives for each SD topic
3	Written feedback round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 stakeholders were invited to provide written feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from interested stakeholders (low response rate)
4	Interviews with selected scientists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 66 selected scientists • Students as interviewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback regarding the topics and the key objectives
5	Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core-team (no external involvement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify indicators for measuring SD key objectives
6	Consultation of experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One expert for each of the 14 topics selected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on topics, key objectives and indicators
7	Final 2 workshops (within one month)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts from step 6 and stakeholders involved in the initial workshop • In total, 50 stakeholders participated in the first workshop and 28 in the second workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of 2 indicators for each key objective
8	Finalisation of the Monitoring Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commented monitoring report on SD in Austria (including draft ver-sion of the Austrian SD indicators)
	Core team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person in charge in BMLFUW + two scientific advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance of the whole process • Ongoing interaction and exchange of information • Regular information to the Commit-tee for a Sustainable Austria

In each of the two final workshops, participants could choose freely to join one out of three working groups that were clustered around 2 or 3 topics.⁴ Topics, key objectives and potential indicators were prepared and the task was to discuss the indicators and select two indicators per key objective. Additional comments on the indicators and their implementation were welcome.

Selection of stakeholders

The stakeholders involved in the process mainly came from public institutions (national and sub-national level) and academia, but also included other experts concerned with specific SD topics and indicators (mainly from social and environmental NGOs). As stakeholders represented public institutions or members of established SD networks, no financial support for individual stakeholders was necessary. The stakeholders were invited on the basis of an initial list developed by the core team of the project. This list also included representatives of several networks (e.g. Committee for a Sustainable Austria, Forum Sustainable Austria) who were asked to distribute the invitation among its members.

Required resources

The process was part of the portfolio of the department of SD and environmental subsidies of the BMLFUW and, therefore, personnel costs were ‘internalized’. Costs for meetings, e.g. venue, workshop equipment, catering, etc, were covered by the ministry. Besides these general costs, an additional budget was required to cover the costs of the scientific advisors of the core team, travel and subsistence of experts, translation services, for students undertaking interviews as well as for

Use of results

As outlined above, the main aim of the whole process was broad involvement of relevant and concerned stakeholders. The implicit objective was to secure the necessary acceptance and commitment of relevant stakeholders regarding the SD indicator set and to utilize knowledge of all involved actors. Therefore, learning from each other in search of the best indicators to measure and monitor SD in Austria was the top priority for the responsible national ministry. Generally, equal opportunities to contribute to the process and to the results were a very important issue; moreover, individual comments could be inserted into the final report. Although the SD indicator set was finalised by the core project team, stakeholders were intensively involved in selecting two indicators per key objective in the concluding workshops. The final report included headline indicators as well as detailed indicators for two SD pillars ("man/society" and "environment") and finally became part of the NSDS by replacing the initial indicator set. The results of the participatory process have been distributed among the participants and published on the ministry's website.

Lessons learned

1) Sufficient time and timing: All interview partners (the organiser as well as the interviewed stakeholders) stressed that a participatory process like this requires considerable time as it was based on qualitative methods (workshops, written feedback round, in-depth expert interviews). Time was a particularly crucial resource for stakeholders to be able to participate in the process (i.e. preparation for meetings, reading documents, dissemination of information and gathering opinions from their organisations). Also timing plays an important role: The experience in Austria shows that at the beginning of the NSDS development (about 1.5 years before the described participatory process took pace), the whole NSDS process was characterised by a top-down approach with little 'indicator culture' in Austria. After two years of indicator use in the NSDS process, the preconditions and experiences changed - public authorities and stakeholders became increasingly familiar with SD indicators. Therefore, the development of the indicator set as a participatory process was organised at the right time.

2) Risk mitigation and conflict mediation: Being aware of certain pitfalls and shortcomings that can happen during a participatory process helps to address risks openly (e.g. participatory processes always bear a certain amount of risk regarding group dynamics). Seeking consensus often requires conflict mediation as decisions need to be taken that will not be favoured by all participants. Especially in such moments, a clear and transparent way of moderation and documentation was seen crucial by the organisers as well as the involved stakeholders.

3) Open communication and transparency: Both, organisers and stakeholders, consider open communication (information dissemination) and transparency (regarding the overall process, objectives, steps and expectations) as important. An example of the participatory process in Austria shows this vividly: Due to the interdisciplinary and cross-cutting nature of the topic, several other departments of the BMLFUW had concerns about the process, especially at the beginning. The open invitation policy and the transparent approach of the whole process, however, transformed this concern into cooperation and engagement of all departments in the ministry.



Participation in the development of the renewed NSDS by the Finnish Sustainable Development Strategy Group

Background and facts

Finland has made extensive experiences with SD strategies, SD programmes and public participatory processes (e.g. [public participation in planning](#)). In 1995, the [Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development \(FNCSO\)](#) prepared the Finnish Agenda 21, "Finnish Action for Sustainable Development". Moreover, at the request of the FNCSO, various public and private sector organisations have drafted their own programmes for SD in the late 1990s. These organisations and their programmes were then included in the multi-stakeholder evaluation process and the results published in 2003. In June 2006, [Finland's renewed NSDS](#) was adopted. For the consultation process, a broad multi-stakeholder "Sustainable Development Strategy Group" (SDSG) was established in 2005 by the FNCSO. The group was chaired by the Under-Secretary from the Ministry of Finance and co-chaired by senior officials from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In total, representatives of 20 stakeholder groups took part in the SDSG. The members represented administrations at national, regional and local levels, businesses, producers and entrepreneurs, labour unions, and environmental, development and youth organisations. For about 6 months, the SDSG developed, together with the FNCSO, an interim report as draft renewed NSDS (published in January 2006) which was then discussed with the various government ministries and with the public via internet. This draft was then adopted as the renewed NSDS of Finland.

Time frame:	August 2005 - June 2006
Type:	Preparation of the renewed NSDS

Responsibility:	Finland's SD secretariat (at the Ministry of Environment) and the Sustainable Development Strategy Group (operational responsibility) Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD) (strategic responsibility) Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (official public responsibility)
Stakeholders involved:	Representatives of 20 stakeholder groups were directly involved
Participatory mechanisms:	Consultation of experts, workshops, stakeholder working groups

Characteristics application practices of public participation:

Policy hierarchy level	Policies and strategies
Form of participation	Hybrid
Degree of participation	Decisional
Breadth of participation	Restricted to invited stakeholders
Vertical participation	National level
Policy cycle stage	Preparation

Description of participatory process and mechanisms used

Following the SD evaluation report of 2003, a participatory process to renew the Finnish NSDS was set up to further improve the strategy and to establish a better link between the NSDS and the EU-SDS. In August 2005, the participatory process to develop the renewed Finnish NSDS began with a strong focus on ensuring broad involvement of various stakeholder groups in order to achieve strong commitment for the renewed NSDS. To ensure that the multi-stakeholder SDSG works efficiently, three sub-groups were established to work on different topics, namely (a) protection and use of natural resources, (b) well-being and (c) sustainable economy. For the preparation of the sub-group meetings, documents and relevant material was sent out to the stakeholders by the chairman of the SDSG, who, during the meeting, drafted the text and marked questions for further clarification. In these sub-groups, experts on specific topics were invited upon request of the sub-group members. The material and pre-decisions taken were distributed via email among the involved stakeholders. In the upcoming SDSG meetings, it was possible for the other sub-groups to get involved and discuss the distributed material. Table 5 below shows the various steps of the participatory process (including the different participatory mechanisms):

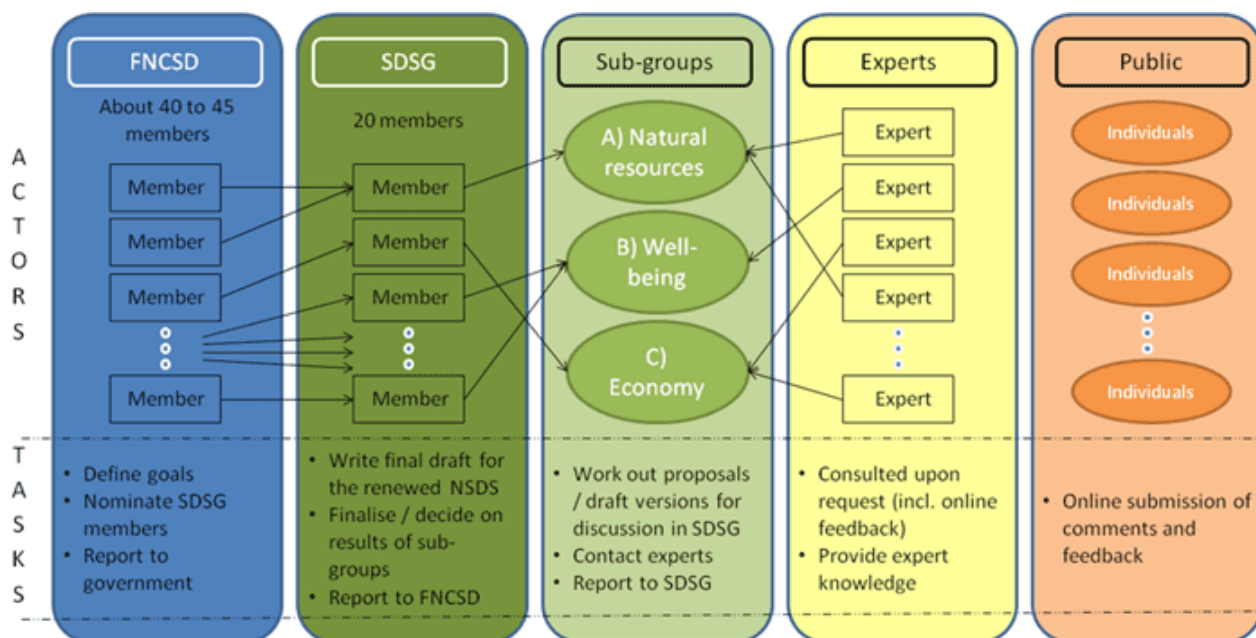
Table 5: Steps of the participatory process for the renewed Finnish NSDS

	Action	Involved actors and stakeholders	Results
	Project preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finland's SD secretariat FNCSD SD researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision to engage in a participatory development Overview of possible implementation strategies Establishment of the SDSG
1	SDSG sub-group meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDSG members that formed sub-groups on economic, environment and social issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on various topics and issues (three sub groups) Preparation of the NSDS text
2	International strategy seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FNCSD Parliament's Environment Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of international SD efforts Exchange of experiences
3	10 SDSG meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDSG members Finnish National Indicator Network of SD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compilation of the text for the renewed NSDS Submission of interim report
4	Open internet-based consultation round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open to all stakeholders, experts and individual citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from interested stakeholders/citizens (low response rate)

5	Finalization of renewed NSDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDSG members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the text for the renewed NSDS
	Approval of renewed NSDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDSG, FNCSD • Finish Government and Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved renewed NSDS

Figure 8 below shows the various actors/stakeholders and their tasks in the participatory process:

Figure 8: Actors/stakeholders and their tasks in the participatory process



Selection of stakeholders

20 persons – each representing one stakeholder group (i.e. administrations at the national, regional and local levels, businesses, producers and entrepreneurs, labour unions as well as environmental, development and youth organisations) – have been directly involved in the participatory process as members of the SDSG. For the formation of the SDSG, each stakeholder group of the FNCSD was asked to nominate one representative. Through this approach, a certain multiplier effect was utilised from the beginning of the process: SDSG members were in close contact and shared information with their networks and members they represent. Additionally, the Finnish National Indicator Network of SD (which exists since 2000) took part in the strategy development process by identifying challenges in the early phase of the work and by developing monitoring indicators, based on input from the SDSG members.

Required resources

The whole process was conducted as part of the work of the involved ministries and, therefore, no additional public budget was required. Besides the stakeholders, about 20 civil servants of different ministries were partly involved in the process. The main coordination was undertaken by the SD secretariat of the FNCSD with the support of two additional civil servants. In general, no compensation for involved stakeholders was provided, although some NGOs and indigenous groups have been financially supported (e.g. by awarding little research projects or reimbursing travel costs).

Use of results

In general, the SD secretariat of the FNCSD tried to reconcile all inputs discussed in the SDSG meetings and, at the end, all final decisions were taken unanimously (no voting). The interim report was discussed within the FNCSD and for two weeks open for public internet consultation (distributed through the network of the involved stakeholder groups) but the response rate was low. After the renewed NSDS was approved by the SDSG and the FNCSD, it was made public on the website of the Ministry of Environment. As the whole process was a project of the FNCSD, no further institutionalized structures needed to be established. However, through the participatory approach, developing the renewed NSDS got considerable political attention and was specifically mentioned in the government programme. In order to make the NSDS more widely known, the FNCSD developed guidelines, facilitated processes (e.g. road-shows within ministries) and

supported further research (e.g. SD integrated impact assessment).

Lessons learned

1) High-level commitment and political continuation: It is regarded as a major success factor that the Finnish government made a high-level commitment to the NSDS and also asked each individual ministry to include SD into their work. Furthermore, political and institutional continuity (the FNCSD exists since 1993) made it possible to create long-term relationships and trust among stakeholders and to sustain the whole process.

2) Time and trust: Compared to the Austrian case, the Finish process was set up with a concrete deadline which was kept and which aligned the different efforts and resources to reach the shared objective. The organisers and stakeholders agreed that this was one of the most important strengths of the process – that it was goal-oriented, but time-efficient. As mentioned above, collaboration and mutual trust between stakeholders was gradually developed over the years within the FNCSD and the experience of developing the first NSDS (in 1997) was used to establish the objective for the renewed NSDS to foster commitment of the stakeholders.

3) Cooperative spirit: Both, the organisers and stakeholders, pointed out that all participants cooperated extensively and, therefore, not only the individual meetings but the whole participatory process was characterised by committed participants who were able to accept compromises to achieve shared final results. This cooperative spirit, the trust built over time and the political commitment formed what an interview partner called a ‘culture of participation’.



Participation in the NSDS revision process in the UK

Background and facts

Generally, participation plays an important role in the UK and consultation processes take place on a regular basis, not only in the context of SD. The participatory process for the renewed NSDS (published in 2005) was carried out for three reasons: (1) Guidelines of the UK Cabinet Office suggest conducting participation processes; (2) participation processes are seen as an element of good governance; and (3) to provide a positive example for other policy processes. Several objectives guided the participatory process, like information gathering (input for the NSDS) and information dissemination (communicate the existence of an NSDS). Moreover, the national government wanted to demonstrate leadership in the field of good governance through the participation process. And finally, the participation aimed to improve delivery of SD outcomes. The participation process was designed very broadly so as to include as many stakeholders as possible. As a result, some parts of the NSDS were revised.

Time frame:	August 2003 - March 2005
Type:	Participatory process for renewed NSDS
Responsibility:	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Stakeholders involved:	Stakeholder groups and experts dealing with SD
Participatory mechanisms:	Workshops with experts at different governance levels, written feedback rounds

Characteristics application practices of public participation:

Policy hierarchy level	Policies and strategies
Form of participation	Hybrid
Degree of participation	Consultative
Breadth of participation	Full participation
Vertical participation	National, regional and local level
Policy cycle stage	Preparation

Description of participatory process and mechanisms used

The renewed NSDS, “Securing the future”, was published in March 2005 and is the third NSDS in the UK (the previous NSDSs were published in 1994 and 1999). SD in the UK government is led by Defra, but SD is generally considered as a cross-sectoral/cross-departmental concern. The participatory process was made up of several elements: The programme board, themed events, regional events, events at the local level and web-based consultation. These elements were chosen to enable a broad range of participation by diverse stakeholders and to link top-down with bottom-up dynamics. One of the objectives was broad stakeholder involvement in order to establish the necessary acceptance and commitment of relevant stakeholders for implementing NSDS objectives and to utilize the knowledge of all involved actors. Table 6 below shows the various steps of the participatory process (including the different participatory mechanisms):

Table 6: Steps of the participatory process for the renewed UK NSDS

Action	Involved stakeholders	Results
Initial workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial collection of the views of some key stakeholders
Draft consultation document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft NSDS
Detailed planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlargement of the team Development of web-based consultation mechanism Development of tool kits for local events Development of the stakeholder database
Web-based consultation process (written feedback round)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,735 stakeholders were invited to answer 42 questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from 845 interested stakeholders, which served as input for the next steps (the workshops)
Themed workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23 themed events by different organisations (partially funded by Defra), focusing on particular parts of the NSDS 2 events addressing SD in general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from over 500 interested stakeholders
Regional workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In each of the 9 regions at least one workshop was held, focusing on the whole NSDS, highlighting regional aspects and addressing the regional stakeholders Further activities (varying among the regions, e.g. surveys) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from over 1,000 interested stakeholders at the regional workshops The further activities generated an additional 757 responses
Local discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 facilitator training and consultation events Community Consultation Packs (tool kits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 240 individuals from local communities attended 6 events A further 176 community groups contributed to the review via the Community Consultation Packs (tool kits)
Programme Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergovernmental consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim: shared ownership through cross-departmental governance
Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons in charge in Defra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance of the whole process Managing several parallel work streams Risk management

Figure 9 below shows the general participatory process for the renewed NSDS in the UK; figures 10 and 11 show the participatory processes at the regional and local levels, respectively.

Figure 9: Participatory process for the renewed UK NSDS

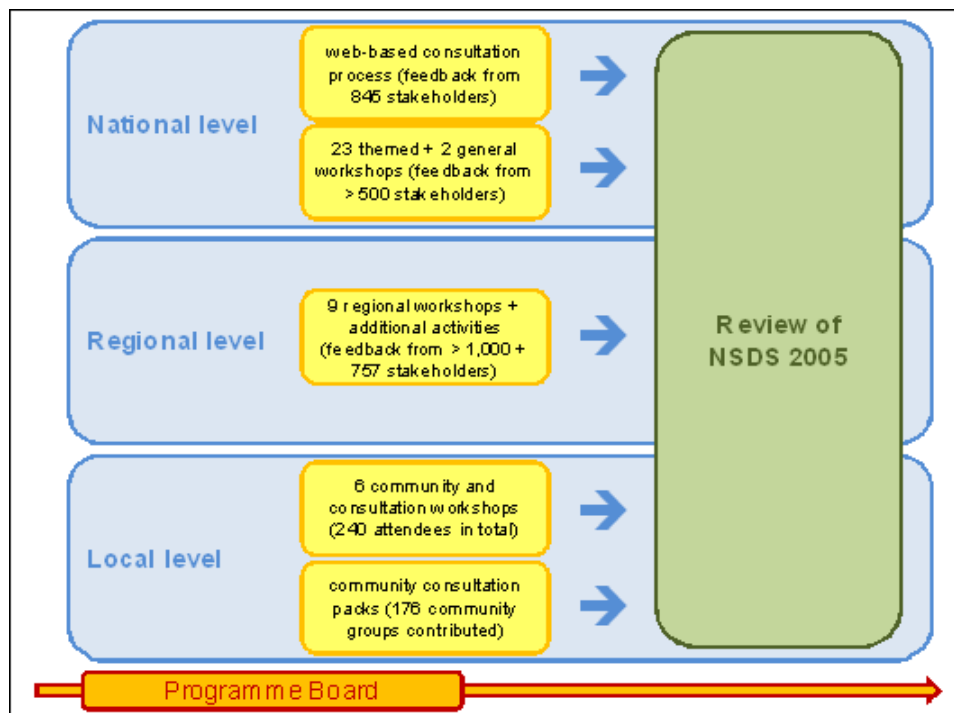
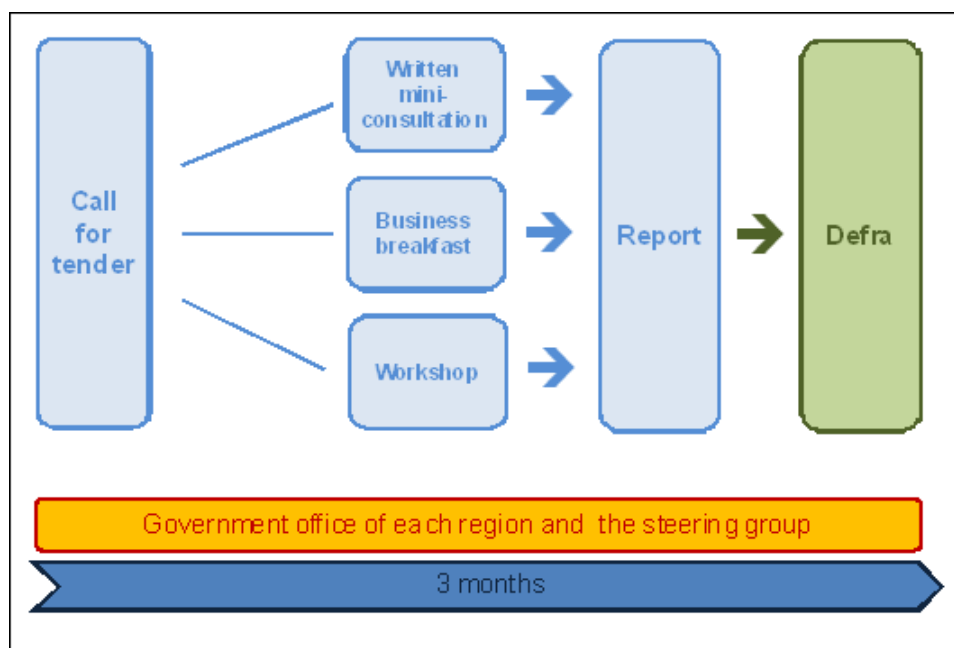
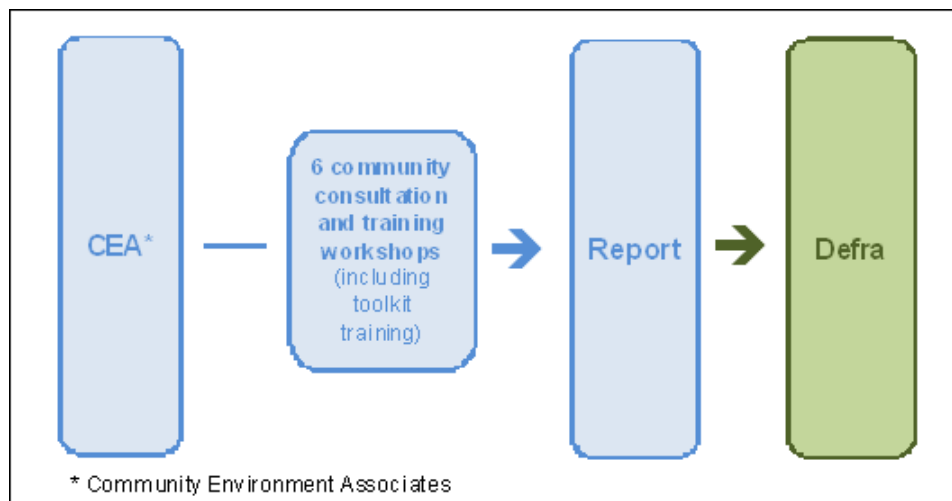


Figure 10: Participatory process at the regional level



Defra asked the Government Offices for the regions to organise consultation processes at the regional level. These processes were three-fold: 1) 'Mini-consultations' (consisting of questionnaires) were conducted with key stakeholders and with the general public; 2) business breakfasts targeted at involving businesses in the process; and 3) workshops were organised. The questionnaires were promoted online and through leaflets which were distributed in the regions. Overall, about 2,000 citizens took part in participation process at the regional level. For each region a report was issued and submitted to Defra.

Figure 11: Participatory process at the local level



At the local level, Defra contracted CEA (Community Environment Associates, a consultancy specialised in work on involving local communities) to organise 6 community consultation and training workshops and to promote the training toolkit. Defra participated in each of those workshops to present the SD strategy review. Overall, 240 individuals were directly involved and an additional 176 community groups were involved in the local consultation through information packs (part of the disseminated toolkit). At the end of the process, CEA prepared a summary report for Defra.

Selection of stakeholder

The participatory process was designed very broadly and as a result, practically all stakeholder groups took part in the process. In total, 1,735 stakeholders were invited from Defra's existing stakeholder database to take part in the web-based consultation process. Furthermore, these stakeholders were asked to further distribute the invitation (i.e. everybody could respond online to the questions or respond via other means, e.g. by mail). As a result, 444 invited stakeholders and 401 additional stakeholders took part in the questionnaire consultation through the snowball effect. Furthermore, the regional and local events included additional stakeholders who were not included in the web-based process. Concerning the structures of the consultation process, additional institutionalized structures were created through cross-sectoral/cross-departmental governance. The above mentioned programme board was a task force led by the Defra minister, but included ministers from different departments as well as representatives of NGOs, businesses, etc. The programme board was crucial for the development of the strategy as well as for its implementation. Through this approach, the participation of all relevant stakeholder groups and experts dealing with SD could be ensured.

Required resources

In comparison to experiences in other countries, the consultation process in the UK was supported by a rather large budget (covering, e.g. personnel costs, the website consultancy, printing costs, event launch, online consultation, themed workshop, regional workshops, community consulting, events at local level). No financial support was granted to the participating stakeholders directly. However, through the regional and local events, stakeholders were supported indirectly as the travel costs could be minimised.

Use of results

The consultation document contained 42 questions, i.e. the stakeholders could comment effectively on all aspects of the NSDS (e.g. principles, priorities, indicators, technical issues, etc.). The questions were open and the answers were analysed within Defra. The consultation process was documented well, including the answers and the changes which were made because of the stakeholder inputs. The results of the participatory process and the documentation of the consultation process have been published on the [SD website of the government](#) and are publicly available in the library of the parliament.

Lessons learned

1) Timely, interactive and open stakeholder involvement: The early engagement with selected stakeholders helped to launch the reviewing process of the NSDS. Furthermore, innovative ways of conducting stakeholder consultations led to wider participation and to the inclusion of more and different stakeholders. The process was designed to be interactive, for instance, the organisation of events and therefore control over the agenda was in some cases delegated to NGOs.

2) Project management: In the UK, a project co-ordinator was recruited to manage the project and to run the complex participatory process. The most important benefits of the external project management were: Identification of

stakeholders, clarity on the aims of the consultation process, and risk management. Throughout the whole process, the different participatory elements were planned and budgeted carefully, the progress was evaluated and risk management was applied.

3) Professional marketing and communication: Defra regards the review of the NSDS as a communications opportunity for SD which could be used to raise the awareness of SD. In this regard, the launch event for the consultation process included discussions, visual presentations and video clips. Furthermore, a marketing-style approach was chosen for the strategy itself. For instance, a visual identity/logo was created to give the review a high profile and to associate it with other events. Experts from a public relations agency supported the marketing campaign.

4) Shared ownership: The participation process was designed cross-departmental to ensure shared ownership. Ministers of different departments were involved in the launch as well as the final strategy.

Notes

¹ For further comparisons of other widely used classifications of degrees of participation, see Green & Hunton-Clarke (2003).

² The 12 countries are: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The analysis was largely based on document analysis (NSDS, progress reports, monitoring reports, etc). In some cases, additional telephone interviews with responsible administrators from national ministries were conducted.

³ The project team interviewed one representative of the national government ministry responsible for the participatory process. For the case studies included in this QR, we interviewed the following persons:
Austria - Ingeborg Fiala, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Environment
Finland - Sauli Rouhinen, Ministry of the Environment
UK - Arik Dondi, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Additionally, three stakeholders, who participated in one or several participatory mechanisms, were interviewed per country.

⁴ Topics in Workshop 1 were: (a) Education and science; and arts and culture; (b) nutrition; and health and well-being; (c) mobility; and housing and spatial planning. Topics in Workshop 2 were: (a) Employment; and leisure time; (b) wealth; international equity; and inter- and intra-generational equity; (c) Governance and participation; peace and security; and freedom.

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