



**EU Sustainable Development Networking Event  
Windsor 14 & 15 July 2005**

**Workshop Theme 2  
Engagement and Evaluation<sup>1</sup>**

This workshop is aimed at sharing views on how to inform, engage and involve stakeholders and the public in sustainable development through consultation on sustainable development strategies and impact assessments. The workshop will also reflect on how the effectiveness of SD strategies has been and can be monitored, evaluated and reported. Past and ongoing approaches to SDS evaluation will be discussed.

**Introduction**

At Kinsale, a number of recommendations were made to strengthen the engagement of stakeholders and the public in the development of national SD strategies, and to reinforce the processes of evaluation, communication and continuous improvement. The need to engage civil society at a local, national, European and global scale is widely recognised as a vital key to the success of any SD strategy, and the adopted measures under the Aarhus Convention reinforce the importance of access to information and public participation. In its working paper of 2004, the European Commission highlighted, as areas where there is a clear need to pool experiences and exchange good practice, approaches to involving stakeholders and engaging the public through effective communication, and approaches to evaluation.

**1. Communicating Sustainable Development**

*Introduction*

The importance of communication in bringing about the societal changes needed for SD cannot be underestimated – some have called it the ‘lifeblood’ of a strategy<sup>1</sup>. Communication – in both directions - and stakeholder engagement are inextricably linked. Here, we are concerned more specifically with *how* the SD messages are communicated to the public.

A range of approaches are taken to awareness raising, with a view to influencing behavioural changes over time, and fostering ownership of the

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<sup>1</sup> This Background Paper has been prepared by the Institute for European Environmental Policy as a basis for discussion and does not necessarily represent the views of DEFRA.

strategy's aims and objectives. Methods used include events, publicity campaigns, reports and websites. These may be delivered by Ministries and/or independently, for example through National SD Councils. In Austria, annual 'Sustainable Weeks' provide an opportunity to raise public awareness and promote the uptake of more 'environmentally friendly' products.

Indicators provide a valuable tool for monitoring and evaluating progress against strategy objectives, and can be used to communicate key messages and trends to policy makers and the public. A number of countries, including the UK, Ireland, Denmark, France, the Czech Republic and Latvia, publish regular reports on indicators for sustainable development, covering all three pillars of SD. Other Member States have developed composite indicators, such as the Human Development Index or the Index for Environmental Space. In Wales, a composite Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) has been developed to inform policy development, while a different approach - ecological footprinting - is used to communicate trends to the public.

**(i) Indicators: The Welsh Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) and Environmental Footprinting.** Simon Bilsborough, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

A number of indicators have been developed in Wales to communicate sustainable development trends, with different approaches taken depending on the audience. To inform *policy decisions*, a complex indicator - the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) - has been developed. The ISEW attempts to provide a time-series measure that captures, in one indicator, the main elements that together contribute to the quality of life in Wales. It incorporates social and welfare aspects of sustainable development, including the consideration of resource distribution within society and usage of natural capital, and provides an indication of the net benefits to society of its production and consumption. It has as its base personal consumption spending, adjusted to arrive at the index value for a given year

The ISEW is compared to GDP, and particular attention is placed on their respective trends. This is used to highlight where policy should focus, in order to close the gap between GDP and ISEW, and steer GDP to a more environmentally and socially sensitive growth path. For example, this comparison has been used to demonstrate that improving the distribution of income can lead to gains in overall welfare.

It is recognised, however, that this indicator would be of limited value for *public* communication. Instead, an ecological footprinting<sup>i</sup> approach has been adopted as a way of demonstrating the impact that Wales has on the planet. The footprint is a common methodology that has been applied to many countries and regions. It calculates how much productive land and sea is needed to provide the energy, water and materials used in our everyday lives. It also calculates emissions generated from the oil, coal and gas we burn, and it determines how much land is required to absorb our waste.

If each person had a 'fair share' of all the productive land and sea available on the planet, it would work out at about two hectares per person. The first Footprint study of Wales<sup>ii</sup> showed that the average Welsh person uses 5.25

global hectares of resources – but if present global trends go unchecked, the human population would need three Earth-sized planets to sustain current consumption patterns.

The Footprint is a useful communication tool in that it is generally easy to interpret. It also allows trends to be tracked over time, helping to assess effectiveness of policy, and enables comparisons to be made with other countries. The data collected can also be used to model different scenarios and examine their impact on the footprint.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. How can approaches such as ISEW and ecological footprinting support the development of policy and improve communication to the general public?
2. Can composite indices give a true reflection of the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development? What are the limitations of such an approach?
3. More generally, how effective are indicators, and composite indicators, as tools for communicating SD?

(ii) ***Raising awareness through sustainable products – Austria’s ‘Sustainable Weeks’.*** Rita Trattnig and Elizabeth Freytag (Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and Water Management).

From 15 September to 15 October 2004, the first ‘Sustainable Weeks’ were held all over Austria. The initiative was developed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW), in co-operation with retailers, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, and individual Federal Provinces, and will now be run on an annual basis. The goal is to raise consumer awareness among the general public, and thus to enhance the sale of sustainable products. The participants jointly take up issues such as organic products, fair trade, regional marketing, construction and living, as well as recycling, and target them in their advertising campaigns. In 2004, the ‘Sustainable Weeks’ involved 10 retail chains with 17 distribution lines, producing about 200 media reports, 30 editions of retail chain flyers with a total circulation of 32 million, and in the 6,890 branches of the participating retail chains.

Throughout the ‘Sustainable Weeks’ a specially-developed logo is used on all advertisements, as well as on the shelves of the respective branches and stores - *“Getting there. The Sustainable Way”* (*‘Das bringt’s. Nachhaltig’*).

For the 2005 ‘Sustainable Weeks’ the food, drug, health, hygiene and beauty retail chains, the construction materials trade and, for the first time this year, electrical retailers have jointly declared themselves willing to target

environmentally benign, regionally produced, and fair-traded products in their advertising.

### *Questions for discussion*

1. What are the best ways of communicating information on SD to the general public?
2. What difference have Sustainable Weeks in Austria made to consumption patterns?

## **2. Involving Stakeholders**

### *Introduction*

Stakeholder participation and public consultation is vital for developing the broad consensus needed on sustainable development, fostering ownership of strategies, and engaging society in delivering SD objectives. While most EU countries support this, and significant efforts are being made, engaging wider society remains a major challenge.

Approaches vary widely between countries, often depending on the attitude of government towards stakeholder involvement, the degree to which civil society is organised, and whether there is a tradition for working in partnership. The Scandinavian countries, for example, have a strong bottom-up approach to policy making and a tradition of well-organised civil society. Finland in particular is highlighted as a leading example. In contrast, Portugal and Hungary have a quite state-centred political culture, and the flow of information from Ministries to non-government actors has been criticised as deficient<sup>iii</sup>.

Across Europe SD Councils are providing a valuable mechanism for organising input from civil society groups, and promoting the SD ethos more widely.

### ***(iii) Engaging stakeholders in Finland. Sauli Rouhinen (FNCSD)***

Finland's engagement procedures to promote sustainable development are based on a holistic approach, where stakeholders are encouraged to be involved and feel part of the process within a bottom-up structure. The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNSCD) provides a good example of this engagement framework.

The FNSCD was set up by the Ministry of the Environment in 1993 to promote sustainable development in Finland. It consists of 44 members representing a broad mix of stakeholders, and has an inter-ministerial secretariat consisting of 20 civil servants. The Commission is chaired by the Prime Minister and has the Minister for Environment as the vice-chair, thus giving a high political status to the sustainability process.

The discussions within the FNCSD are based on an open platform between the Government and the stakeholders, where stakeholders have an opportunity for direct dialogue with the Government. The dialogue aspect of the meetings is more important than consensus building, providing an arena for the creation of new partnerships and networks. The stakeholders then disseminate the results from these meetings to their organisations and the Government is provided with ideas for new initiatives. Another aspect of the engagement process is that the stakeholders are informed early about new policies by the FNCSD.

The involvement of the stakeholders is varied, providing not only an input to the sustainable development agenda, but also participating in the evaluation process. For example, stakeholders who prepared their own SD programmes for the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy (1998) were included in the evaluation process of the Government's programme for sustainable development in 2002/03. To involve a broader group of new stakeholders the FNCSD has launched partnership programmes, which have also led to new modes of action within the sustainable development framework.

Recently the FNCSD made a decision to launch a new SD strategy process from September 2005. The Strategy Group (SG) includes 20 members from different ministries, NGOs, local authorities, the province of Lapland and worker and trade unions, and is chaired by a high-level official from the Ministry of Finance. Engagement methods will build upon the existing engagement procedures as well as seminars, small workshops and a broad national consultation via the Internet.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. How has Finland succeeded in engaging different stakeholder groups in the SD process? How will the partnership programmes enhance this?
2. Are the methods of engagement reaching out to the general public, or just 'interested parties'?
3. To what extent are stakeholders helping to deliver national SD objectives?
4. What are the resource implications of stakeholder participation?
5. What aspects of stakeholder engagement need to be developed further?

#### **(iv) Public Communication Through Stakeholder Councils - Experiences from the German RNE. Dr. Günther Bachmann (RNE)**

Germany's national Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung, or RNE<sup>IV</sup>) was established in April 2001 to advise the government on SD policies, prepare contributions to the national strategy and to propose concrete projects for the SDS. It also has a key role in raising awareness of SD and fostering societal dialogue on these issues. There are 19 members of the RNE, representing economic, social and environmental concerns.

In the benchmark study carried out by the EEAC – *Sustaining Sustainability* – the innovative approaches taken by both RNE and the German government in communicating SD and engaging stakeholders were noted. This work has included:

- Annual public conferences, covering a range of SD issues on a high political level (culture and sustainability; sustainability and occupation of land; world agricultural trade and sustainability; the significance of coal for a sustainable energy industry; and sustainable consumption).
- A school literature competition *Focus on Tomorrow* (Blick auf morgen) for young people, to improve public awareness of sustainability.
- Marketing competition for teenagers producing free cards.
- Production of a short film "Ins Herz der Zukunft" with contributions from amateur groups of film-makers
- Initiating a talk-show series on the eve of the WSSD.
- Two workshops with actors from art and culture on the relation of these fields to SD.
- The organisation of a dialogue process on the issue of land use and land consumption for housing and construction purposes, and presentation of advice to government.
- Initiating a seed-money fund provided by the Federal Government and open for application by local groups engaged in sustainability issues. The Bundesaktion Bürger initiieren Nachhaltigkeit is expected to improve participation and public involvement.

More recently, the RNE initiated 'Facing Sustainability', a photography contest to illustrate sustainability through images and words. The results of the contest will be presented at RNE's annual conference in September 2005, devoted to the key issues of economic growth and sustainability.

Though much has been achieved, it is acknowledged by RNE and the government that so far they have engaged only the more 'interested' public, and reaching out to society as a whole remains a major challenge.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. How effective has the RNE's communication work been in developing greater public awareness and ownership of SD issues?
2. What are the main challenges in communicating SD to the wider public? What can be done to move this forward?

### **3. Evaluating national strategies and continuous improvement**

#### *Introduction*

In order to assess the effectiveness of any strategy, processes for monitoring and evaluation need to be in place. These are important steps in the cyclical process of reviewing and revising national strategies, allowing for regular stocktaking of the strategy's outcomes and assessment of the processes

involved in its development and implementation (communication, stakeholder participation, reporting, etc). Evaluation not only supports continuous improvement at the national level, but also offers a means of sharing good practice and lessons with other countries. However, for many countries monitoring and evaluation remains a challenge. New approaches continue to be developed, including lesson sharing through peer reviews and independent evaluation at a national level.

**(vi) *Independent scrutiny of national strategies – a new role for the UK SDC.* Emma Downing (Sustainable Development Commission)**

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) is the UK Government's independent advisory body on sustainable development. It was established in 2000 following a proposal in the UK Government's 1999 Sustainable Development Strategy - *A Better Quality of Life*.

The role of the SDC is to *'inspire government, the economy and society to embrace Sustainable Development as the central organising principle'*. It is charged with advocating sustainable development across all sectors of the UK, particularly within Government and the Devolved Administrations, and to build consensus on the actions needed if further progress is to be achieved. Until recently, the specific tasks of the SDC were to:

- identify key unsustainable trends which will not be reversed on the basis of current or planned action, and recommend action to reverse the trends;
- encourage and stimulate good practice;
- establish good working relationships with key parts of government in promoting sustainable development;
- deepen awareness of the concept of sustainable development within key sectors, and build agreement on how to address them; and
- act as a 'critical friend' to government in appraising its performance in delivering sustainable development;

The advocacy and advice functions of the SDC continue, but in March 2005 the government committed to strengthening the SDC and expand its role to act as an 'independent watchdog' for sustainable development, particularly reviewing and reporting on the Government's progress on the strategy. Progress monitoring of previous strategies has been undertaken by the Government itself, except for occasional reports and evidence sessions conducted by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). The Government now proposes to move to 'independent scrutiny of action on sustainable development across Government to determine whether real progress is being made'<sup>v</sup>.

The SDC will report on progress towards implementing the UK Framework and the commitments in the UK Government Strategy, including on the institutional and accountability arrangements, as well as focusing in more depth on particular issues. All Government departments and their executive agencies are now required to produce focused sustainable development action plans based on the Strategy by December 2005. These will be key source of information for the SDC in its new role.

The development of this new watchdog function is underway, and as a first step the SDC is evaluating the auditing, reporting and scrutiny systems which are currently employed across the UK to assess the implementation and development of sustainable development policy. This approach should assist the Commissioners in developing an effective watchdog function for the SDC by identifying:

- the types of regular reports needed to inform its assessments
- the kinds of new partnerships/working arrangements required
- the key areas where a new watchdog can add value in relation to SD.

#### *Questions for Discussion*

1. How can independent evaluation of national SD strategies benefit the overall process?
2. Will the UK SDC's watchdog role conflict with its other responsibilities?
3. What lessons can be drawn from other experiences of evaluation to support the UKSDC in its new watchdog role?

**(vi) Peer Review of the French National Strategy for Sustainable Development<sup>vii</sup>.** *André-Jean Guérin (French Ministère de l'Ecologie et du Développement Durable).*

The pilot peer review of the French national strategy for sustainable development provides valuable experience and lessons for applying peer reviews elsewhere.

It was launched in 2004, following a commitment made by Jacques Chirac at the WSSD in 2002 to allow the national strategy to be peer reviewed by other countries.

The Institute for International Environment and Development (IIED) in the UK was engaged as independent consultant for the peer review process, and four countries acted as peers: Belgium; Ghana; Mauritius; and the UK. Four key steps were involved:

1. Preparation of a background report, including questionnaires to key actors and structured interviews, to inform peer reviewers of the national situation.
2. Methodology workshop to review and agree on the methodology. This agreed that the focus should be on process, content, outcomes and monitoring and indicators.
3. Peer review workshop (one week) – involving two representatives from each peer country (one governmental and one from civil society), 35 participants from the French government and civil society, and observers from the European Commission, UNDESA and Francophonie. The workshop generated a set of recommendations.
4. Revision of methodology – based on lessons learned in the French process, an updated methodology was produced for future use.



The peer review workshop brought together governmental and non-governmental actors, from France and the peer countries, to reflect on developments in France in a balanced way, drawing on experiences and perspectives from the group. An added benefit of this approach was that it gave peer countries access to information, lessons and expertise beneficial to their own SD strategy processes. The role of the peers was to observe, ask questions and then to help distil the information.

The methodology and experience of the French peer review was presented, and well received, at a side event at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in April 2005. Following this, several countries have committed to having reviews of their own strategies, and there is a desire at the EU and UN level to develop a methodological framework to assist this process.

#### *Questions for Discussion*

1. How has the peer review exercise supported the national SDS continual improvement process?
2. What lessons can we learn from the French peer review work (practical experiences, resource implications etc)?
3. Could this approach be applied elsewhere?
4. Should peer review of national strategies be encouraged at an EU level? If so, how?

**(vii) *Evaluating the impact of the Austrian national strategy.* Rita Trattnig and Elizabeth Freytag (Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and Water Management).**

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW) has appointed an interdisciplinary group of independent experts to evaluate implementation activities under the Austrian Sustainability Strategy. The BMLFUW is breaking new ground by applying an evaluation process to such a complex strategy. The evaluation is to be jointly carried out by Adelphi Consult, the Free University of Berlin's Environmental Policy Research Centre, and D-Coach. The evaluation process started in May 2005 and is due to finish in November 2005 with a comprehensive evaluation report.

The evaluation process aims at assessing the impact of the Austrian Sustainability Strategy, applying criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and appropriateness to evaluate the implementation process, and developing suggestions to improve the Strategy's effects and the institutions' effectiveness. The evaluation primarily focuses on the implementation process, with a distinction made between implementation mechanisms (institutions and instruments involved in the Strategy's on-going implementation) and implementation activities (measures and projects to reach milestones). In contrast, the Strategy itself and the policy goals defined in it are not subject to the evaluation process.

The evaluation covers the period from April 2002 to May 2005, and comprises standardised assessment via questionnaires, a series of on-site interviews, and detailed research into the Sustainability Strategy's specific mechanisms and instruments.

The evaluation is structured as a participatory process and uses workshops with representatives involved in selected implementation measures, experts from the provincial (Länder) Governments involved, and local Agenda 21 processes.

The BMLFUW steering group and a project advisory board oversee the evaluation process. The advisory board includes representatives from diverse stakeholder groups. The board's primary function is to offer detailed definitions of the issues, provide feedback on the findings from the current evaluation process, and bind the evaluation process into the particular network of stakeholders.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. In a crowded arena of policies and programmes, how can the impacts of a single strategy be evaluated? What barriers are faced in such evaluations and how can these be overcome?
2. Is it possible to produce quantitative assessments of SD strategies, or are qualitative assessments more appropriate?
3. How will results from the evaluation feed into continual improvement of the national SD strategy?

#### **References:**

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  - iv [http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/service/download/pdf/RNE-Factsheet\\_English.pdf](http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/service/download/pdf/RNE-Factsheet_English.pdf)
  - v Securing the Future, delivering UK sustainable development strategy, Defra, March 2005 p.166
  - vi [http://www.nssd.net/peer\\_review.html](http://www.nssd.net/peer_review.html)
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