

Feedback of the ESDN Conference – lunch day 1

Ordered by following topics: Government, Economics, Resources, ESDN and others

Government and Policies

- Approaches/Policies/Instruments not particularly new, but convince finance ministries and business; targeted action to these groups as a key message from the morning session.
- When choosing policy tools, take into account empirical evidence of performance and limits, in particular for economic instruments.
Resource scarcity for specific materials is a function of the technologies we develop, depending on them (e.g. rare earth's for efficiency technologies) (2)
- Closer contact on national level between government offices and the office for statistics is needed in order to achieve a better follow up on policy measure.
- Sustainable development is on a weak hand of national governance. More high management level needed.
- Adaption of existing government/ governance structures – on national and European levels. How can we initiate it?
- Bringing SD principles as the streamlines into policy mix to address current and future challenges, emphasizing resource efficiency.
- Education! Give people information on choices. Need of strong state and strong governance to deliver this. Training interaction of ideas into other sectors than environment. Tax instruments to persuade sustainable behavior
- Governance, regulations, incentives (how little or no progress due to national egoism) versus market based instruments (only becomes effective right before or even often hitting the "iceberg").
Transdisciplinarity – get everyone involved.
- Too many governments only think in the short-term and are focused on policies that will get them votes. Government funding/budgets are also allocated in the short-term, potentially wasting resources. More continuity needed between successive governments.
- "Strong" government/state has been a contributor of green growth and economic success -> governance matters! (Germany, Korea, China vs. USA), not everything can be left for markets to figure out.
- Better links with policy and reality needed, policies and regulations should be based on accurate facts and data. And the enforcement and impact should be followed and monitored regularly.
- Policy instruments: different (market based) regulation and other – very important to neglect. Harmful subsidies, and use VAT as incentives, public procurement. (1)
Complex, comprehensive approach is needed, cooperate with different stakeholders, population, institutions.
Change Consumption level.
Resource availability should be a criterion already in RTD (FP8) to avoid this mechanism.
- Too much demand for more data, indicators, etc.
But we firstly need the change of politicians to take steps forward, even with not knowing all the data because the direction is clear.

- I find it necessary to move from political, stakeholder, scientific discussion towards effective implementation of measuring progress or no-progress through a set of indicators (can..... (6)
- Getting the message across – breaking down the barriers between policy sectors, ministries, private sector.
- Governance: institutions and better processes are needed to improve “horizontal coordination” within government and parliament. Build within an SD strategy!
- Governance/ Knowledge: better “bridging the gap” between science and policy-making, more inter- and transdisciplinary research and transfer, SD councils as a model.
- Why not implemented yet?
We have politicians, public administration, ministries, researchers, international organizations here, all with the same message, still is nothing happening – Who is getting/sharing the message? Why is the practical implementation still so far from being realized? Who is the one/ are the ones in the countries to not pushing forward/ breaking the development or opposing the initiatives? We should focus on that/them... to make it happen.
- We cannot compartmentalize, we need to move out of SILO thinking- we need: governance, coordination, integration, cross-sectoral. How to achieve this? What is needed? Who is to be in the driver seat?

Economics

- Rethink our economic models! This will require a completely new economics, redefinition of the state, of politics, of the private sector, of ownership, structures etc., but the change is necessary. Absolute decoupling will not be possible in the current system, devised on economic growth, creation of new wants and access to cheap energy.
- Eradicate poverty reverse the ongoing process of growing inequality- This is one of the biggest underlying problems that makes it almost impossible to set the change towards a sustainable society into motion. This problem has hardly been addressed.
- Green EU taxes and labour tax to improve economic growth and prevent environmental degradation.
Focus on critical raw materials for recycling and steep on that by stimulating investments.
- Remove harmful subsidies and tax reform as a contribution to resource efficiency and public finance consolidation at the same time.
- Maybe we (developed countries) should first show the good example and make the transition to a real green economy (which should be credible on the global level) that includes the three pillars of sustainable development?
- We have to find a broader indicator than GDP representing the development and preservation of our natural resources at the same time.
- Do there exist studies that calculate the employment: effects of resource efficiency, as it exists for climate-wrecking gases?
- What struck me: Nobody integrated the recent economic crises in the analyses and proposals.
- How can we promote business models that are geared towards promoting well-being satisfying people’s needs- rather than promoting consumption and ownership of things? We need to make a business case!

- How to create tunnels through the Kuznet's curve - not only for developing countries, also for "dinosaurs" in EU countries- to deal with these issues on EU level, not only on national levels. To link these discussions with "labour policies" - unemployment!
- What is the definition of "Green growth" and "Green Economy"?
How to convince developing countries to make the transition to "Green Economy"/ Resource efficient economies?
- Jobs by innovation?

Resources

- Shifting the burden from labour to resources, also as a way to deal with the rebound effect. How to define strong ambitions and justifiable (defendable) targets with insufficient data and knowledge (apply the precautionary principle?), and set them at the right level considering distribution of resources, like water, biodiversity, land... which is uneven.
- Binding resource reduction (not only efficiency) targets are needed.
Increase in taxes on resources should largely flow to south (to gain their support at Rio +20). Don't forget population! Even in Europe, carrying capacity needs to be considered (stabilization, zero growth does not necessarily resolve issue)
- Absolute resource use reduction is needed through new regulations, while also taking into account social issues (how it would affect the poor).
- Quality of life- Local Resource use = SD
- Three strategy approaches: sustainable production, sustainable consumption (especially tackling the rebound effect), waste prevention and recycling.
Need to concrete targets of absolute decoupling.
- International cooperation: EU, UNDP, OECD etc.
Is there the need to have a "cross-cutting" global mechanism for science cooperation on resource efficiency?
- Work on clear and consistent resource concept in Europe, reflecting limits and potentials of natural capital.
- I agree very much that we need targets for sustainable management of resources, in Europe as well as globally (Rio 2012!)

ESDN

- I think a future objective of the ESDN should be to extend its reach so that it encompasses officials from a broader range of Ministries and representatives from other spheres such as business, industry etc.
- Invite Industry to ESDN Conferences!
- Engage people from Ministries of Economy, Finance, Agriculture, Industry, Innovation, Science in ESDN.
- What ESDN could do is examine:
How to communicate a simplified SD European level message in the average citizen or CEO in Europe that will be understood, accepted and driven forward by them. (Based on all reviewed conferences and discussion papers.) This could perhaps be best done by the members of ESDN themselves; interdisciplinary approach in series of ESDN workshops.

Others:

- Focusing on important targets for change: e.g.: removal of subsidies, collection and availability of data on resource scarcity, highlighting success stories, governance for sustainability (integration, crosscutting, international)
- Improve communication to the public at large: explain in a few words/pictures why one should change a number of issues, like resource use, consumption, inequalities and why we should do so now.
- Need for targets (Europe 2020 indicators)- these are not so far but it will take too much time to get them (a few years more?)
- Need to engage different communities, in particular business section- Eco-Industry and selected services. Need to empower the citizen on knowledge about SD and resource efficiency.
- Don't postpone commitments on targets by reintroducing scientific uncertainty as an excuse. Remember there was a precautionary principle around.
- What? How? For whom?
What? = human wellbeing as goal – more than increasing consumption power
How? = start from the challenges, not the existing structures- integral and integrated
DG=DG RE
For whom? = from pupils/students to business managers and government officials, from north to south
- Be better aware of the needs of the “south” and take them into consideration – solutions are not the same, they depend on where you live.
- How to convince the south that development is possible in low resource mode?
- I'm skeptical about factor 4/5/10/etc., tax reform etc. all this has been known since many years, but nothing changed despite this knowledge....
- Public procurement should be the best practice.
- Public procurement (Anders Wijkmann) is great, but it requires to stop the trend of privatization of public works.
- RTD FP 8 should only focus on sustainable innovation.
- “The miner boy” – give a human face for the resource policy.
- It's the key to touch social responsibility!