



Federal Ministry for the  
Environment, Nature Conservation  
and Nuclear Safety



# Workshop Report

## *7<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop*

### **“Perspectives for European SD Policy & Governance in the context of recent EU policy strategies and Rio+20”**

Hosted by the [ESDN](#) in cooperation with the  
[German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety](#)

**Berlin, 27-28 October 2011**

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## Introduction

The 7<sup>th</sup> ESDN workshop, entitled “Perspectives for European SD Policy & Governance in the context of recent EU policy strategies and Rio+20”, took place in Berlin on 27-28 October 2011 and was hosted by the ESDN in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. In total, 45 participants from 16 European countries attended the workshop, including ESDN members, representatives from the Secretariat-General of the European Commission, the EEAC, the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, and Eurostat as well as many experts from national ministries, academia and NGOs. The list of participants can be found in Annex I of this report.

## Thematic outline

Sustainable development (SD) is a complex policy concept which involves the integration and coherence of different policy sectors, the coordination between different tiers of government, strategic objectives and high-level commitment, implementation through adequate policies and related measures, monitoring and evaluation procedures, etc. All of this points to the necessity of developing adequate governance mechanisms for achieving SD. One important tool for SD governance is policy strategies that outline a coordinated process and specific targets to achieve a balance of economic, environmental and social objectives.

Currently, the framework for SD policy and governance in the European Union is in a state of change. The [EU SDS of 2006](#) requires that in 2011 the European Council should decide “when a comprehensive review of the EU SDS needs to be launched” (para 45); a decision on the review will also influence the future of the EU SDS. SD issues and targets are increasingly included in other important EU policy strategies, most notably in the [Europe 2020 strategy](#), Europe’s major policy strategy to achieve “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, the Europe 2020 flagship initiative, [“A resource-efficient Europe”](#) (2011), and its [Roadmap](#) that was adopted on 20 September 2011.

Additionally, the [UN Conference on Sustainable Development \(Rio+20\)](#) will focus on the institutional framework for SD and issues of SD governance as one of its major themes, including SD strategy processes at the national level. At a recent UNCSD High Level Dialogue in preparation of Rio+20 in Solo/Indonesia on 19-21 July 2011, the [chair summarized](#) important messages to move the theme forward. Among them were (i) the renewed political commitment for SD and a translation of this into concrete implementation; (ii) ensuring the integration of economic, environmental and social policies; (iii) increased support for national SD strategies; (iv) SD governance at all levels needs to be reviewed, supported and strengthened; and (v) budgetary resources for SD implementation, capacity-building and technology transfer.

All of these recent developments and pressing policy issues (e.g. fiscal consolidation, demographic changes, etc.) call for discussions on how SD policy and governance can be best addressed in current EU policy strategies and in preparation for the Rio+20 conference. The ESDN is mentioned in the EU SDS as a mechanism to facilitate the exchange of good practices and experiences as well as to support Member States to enhance mainstreaming SD issues and horizontal and vertical policy-making. It is the ideal network to foster discussions about the current state of SD policy and governance and future developments.

## Topics and format

The workshop focussed on questions such as: Which SD topics and targets are currently included in EU policy strategies, and which governance mechanisms are applied? Which experiences have been made with SD policy and governance in Europe? What is the added-value and future of national SD strategies (NSDSs)? Which monitoring/evaluation mechanisms are necessary to assess the achievement of SD policy and governance? What is the future role of SD institutions and mechanisms in the SD governance process (i.e. ESDN, national SD councils, bi-annual progress reporting period, etc) in Europe? What should SD policy and governance in Europe look like in the future?

The workshop consisted of three sessions: Session 1 concentrated on reflections of SD policy & governance in Europe. The session consisted of two panel discussions: the first panel focused on the stakeholder perspective, the second one on the political perspective. This was followed by a plenary discussion on SD policy & governance in the context of EU policy strategies. Session 2 of the workshop was an interactive session with three “country islands”: Belgium, Finland and Germany presented their experiences with SD policy & governance, and the workshop participants discussed with the country representatives. After this interactive format, a plenary discussion on the experiences and future requirements of SD policy & governance rounded up the first workshop day. Session 3 dealt with future requirements of SD governance and the role of institutions/mechanisms. A keynote presentation on future perspectives and requirements of SD policy & governance in Europe kicked off this final session. This was followed by parallel discussion groups that reflected on SD governance and provided further input for the matrix. The results of the discussion groups were presented in a final plenary discussion that also reflection on the possible role of the ESND in SD governance in Europe.

## Welcome addresses

**Stefan Bauernfeind** (Head of Division for Sustainable Development at the German Federal Chancellery) welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of the German Chancellery. He pointed out that the 7<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop is very timely, as the role of the EU SDS is currently intensively debated at the European and Member States level. Sustainable development (SD) is an overarching objective of the EU and, therefore, a decision on the review of the EU SDS (due in 2011, as mentioned in the strategy itself) is important for the future of SD in Europe. He then outlined the approach of the German NSDS and its related governance processes. On the one hand, the German SD Division is placed at the Federal Chancellery, which signals the importance of SD in Germany as a guiding principle of policy making. On the other hand, the NSDS includes general objectives and targets that are regularly monitored. A sustainability check has been compulsory since 2009. Moreover, participation in the NSDS process is considered as important in Germany: the National SD Council has a crucial role to play and the NSDS progress reports have been developed with broad stakeholder consultation.

The ESDN co-chair, **Elisabeth Freytag** (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria), welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of the ESDN Steering Group. She mentioned that the EU SDS is an important policy document for SD governance on the EU and Member States level. Therefore, it is crucial that the Council decides soon when the review of the EU SDS will start. She argued that the Europe 2020 Strategy includes some SD relevant issues, but the main focus of this strategy is on growth and employment. And growth, she continued, is not the ultimate goal of SD – SD wants the economy to respect environmental limits, to address social equity, and to take into account the global dimensions of SD (incl. justice and poverty issues). Moreover, the EU SDS is an important steering document for the NSDS in the Member States.

**Jörg Mayer-Ries** (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany) welcomed the participant on behalf of the local hosts. After presenting the agenda of the event, he outlined the workshop objectives: (i) gaining momentum for the review of the EU SDS, but also going a few steps further towards a renewal of the EU SDS; (ii) discussing the SD governance system in Europe as well as the role of policy strategies and their relationships; and (iii) discussing mechanisms and instruments that provide a structure for SD. From the ESDN point of view, the workshop has a strategic dimension and should achieve concrete results for SD governance in Europe.

## Session 1: Reflection on SD policy & governance in EU policy strategies

Session 1 consisted of two panel discussions: the first one reflected on SD policy & governance in Europe from the stakeholders' perspective, the second one from a political perspective. All panellists were asked to take into account four specific issues in their introductory statements: (a) the current state of SD governance in Europe; (b) the importance of the EU SDS in SD governance; (c) the importance of other policy strategies for SD, and (d) requirements for the future of SD governance in Europe.

### **Panel 1 – The Stakeholders' Perspective**

The panel consisted of:

- William M. Lafferty, ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research AS, Norway
- Jan de Smedt, European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)

- Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Advisor, Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED)

**William M. Lafferty** (ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research) started by reflecting on the current state of SD governance in Europe. He argued that most emphasis is given to the rhetoric of strategies and action plans, but relatively little is done on specific follow-ups in the form of directives or effective policy integration. Moreover, the current European Commission does not seem very keen to actively embrace SD and the current focus is on economic growth issues. Nevertheless, initiatives to integrate SD values and goals in the EU treaties and other legal/political documents of the EU are clearly more visible and conceptually integrated in the EU than in most Member States.

The Europe 2020 Strategy and its related initiatives and action plans are all very “growth” and “competition” oriented. There is very little evidence of profiled integration of SD values – particularly with respect to the pressing issues of climate change, biodiversity, environment-and-health, etc. A question can be raised as to whether cross-strategy integration is at all fruitful for SD goals if there are not serious governing mechanisms in place to reconcile trade-offs among competing economic, social and environmental concerns. The pursuit of primarily “win-win solutions” has proved to be both very difficult and of little consequence in terms of actual policy outcomes.

In terms of requirements for the future of SD governance, Professor Lafferty said that it would be important to look more critically at two of the most-often cited “mantras” by NGOs in EU strategy work: (a) the strong focus on “targets and indicators”, and (b) the ongoing endorsement of more and more “stakeholder involvement” in formulating and implementing SD strategies. He argued that the negative aspects of both – in terms of actually holding back more effective implementation – emphasises the need for much greater discussions and scrutiny. He also pointed to the need – after 20 years of attempts to “realize Rio” in Europe – of “speaking truth to power”. There is a clear need for more consequential “governing” initiatives: legislation, regulation, etc., particularly with respect to those environmental aspects of the SD agenda, which directly impinge on life-sustaining ecological systems. In this connection, it should be stressed that “Environmental Policy Integration” (EPI), as clearly stated in Article 11 of the Treaty of the European Union, is a legally proscribed guideline stating that: “Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.” The clear implication of this Article is that the “precautionary principle” must be given increased visibility and weight in all future discussions, to the advantage of environmental concerns. Finally, Professor Lafferty suggested addressing an appeal to DG Research for significantly enhanced governance-related themes, and more active outreach and funding for political-science research in this area.

**Jan De Smedt** (EEAC) argued, by addressing the current state of SD governance in Europe, that the SD institutions and instruments created to implement the results of the Rio Conference of 1992 (e.g. SD strategies) have not had much impact on mainstream policy-making. As a consequence of a non-sustainable answer to the unsustainable trends in the world, today’s society is confronted with multiple crises (e.g. financial and economic crisis). He argued that in order to improve SD policy, a social contract for SD should be established that takes into account the ecological limits of the planet and simultaneously ensures that the transition towards SD will be just and fair.

Regarding the importance of the EU SDS in SD governance, Mr De Smedt pointed out that the EEAC recently organised a conference on Rio+20 in Wroclaw, Poland and adopted a statement and a Wroclaw consensus with policy recommendations for the EU on Rio 20 plus and SD policy (please see <http://www.eeac.eu>). For the EEAC, SD strategies should be the key policy tool in mainstreaming SD in

policy. Today, the EU SDS is a beauty, but it is a sleeping beauty. The EU SDS has neither become the central organising principle of all EU policies, nor has it provided strategic direction for long-term EU policies. In the EEAC's view, the EU SDS needs to underpin socio-economic strategies such as Europe 2020, budgetary processes and road maps. That is the reason why the EEAC demands an ambitious redefinition of the EU SDS after the Rio+20 Conference. This should be decided, at the latest, at the next EU Spring Council.

On the importance of other policy strategies for SD, Mr. De Smedt argued that the Europe 2020 Strategy is, unlike the EU SDS, combined with the Stability and Growth Pack and thus is really mainstreamed and has more political weight. The EEAC is, therefore, in favour of a two-track approach: On the one hand, an ambitious redefinition of the EU SDS is required. But on the other hand, all actors should work on mainstreaming SD in core policies, in particular the Europe 2020 Strategy and budgetary processes. Although the Europe 2020 Strategy has a strong economic focus, one cannot deny that the strategy and its Flagships Initiatives also include important social and ecological objectives. However, the danger exists that in reality, European politics will mainly focus on the very short-term financial and economic objectives because of budgetary constraints. In fact, the 7 Flagship Initiatives have disappeared from view in the Annual Growth Survey.

As of requirements for the future of SD governance, Mr. De Smedt argued that SD governance should be perceived by the citizens as a stable building block for a new social contract for a better life. Based on a survey among National SD Councils undertaken in 2010, the EEAC developed a number of recommendations for SD governance that are also relevant for EU policy: SD should be the central organising principle for policy-making; importance of political leadership; civil society and SD councils should be important actors in policy-making; sustainable impact assessment and SD-indicators as instruments; important role of SD communication; and building up capacity for SD.

**Jan-Gustav Strandenaes** (ANPED)<sup>1</sup> began by outlining the “four freedoms” of the EU (free movement of capital, labour, goods and services) which are all exclusive instead of inclusive. He then outlined the relationship between governance and SD and argued that to build a consensus in support of SD is a necessarily democratic and participatory exercise for at least three reasons: (i) a breaking down of the polarized and polarizing languages that reflect entrenched ideologies; and (ii) environmental values and democracy are bound together at the level of principle; (iii) the challenge of global SD demonstrates that the crises of ecology and democratic legitimacy are inextricably linked.

Mr. Strandenaes pointed out that the challenge for strategies for sustainable environmental development is threefold: (a) to determine which issues are best addressed at which level; (b) to ensure coherence between policy options pursued at different levels; and (c) to find ways of ensuring local people are involved, even when it appears that the policy agenda is best focused at national or international initiatives. He argued that governance is overwhelmingly associated with the work of governments. Yet during the last two decades, the governmental mode of governance has been complimented by modes of governance in which non-governmental organizations and the private sector are key partners. This trend is illustrated by the growth of private sector standards and of public-private partnerships, from the local to the global level. “Good governance” consists of at least of four important mechanisms: participation, accountability, transparency, implementation and access.

Regarding the Europe 2020 Strategy, Mr. Strandenaes argued that if this document is going to replace the EU SDS, then the EU has weakened its position on SD and governance considerably; even if the EU

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<sup>1</sup>Please find the PPT slides of Mr Strandenaes presentation at the [ESDN homepage](#).

SDS is expected to be integrated into the Europe 2020 Strategy, when it comes to SD issues, Europe is still not good enough. He pointed out that Europe 2020 talks about the sustainability of the future of banks, of businesses, there is talk of sustainable growth, of a sustainable industrial base, etc. The approach of this strategy is best summarised in the document itself: “What is needed is a strategy to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.” However, the sustainability of businesses is a concept that is very different from business for SD: a sustainable future is something entirely different from a future working towards SD, and a sustainable economy is entirely different from an economy for SD.

With regards to future requirements in SD governance, Mr. Strandenaes pointed out that strengthening the governance of the financial institutions is crucial in order to address the weaknesses identified during the financial crisis. Moreover, it is necessary to fill the regulatory gaps in order to promote transparency, stability and accountability as regards derivatives and market infrastructure. Currently, governance focuses on institutions (i.e. Council of Ministers, European Commission, European Parliament) but not on reforming these institutions. Only on the national, regional and local level is civil society mentioned. However, he argued that civil society is expected to help implement the decisions of the European Council and is thus crucial for SD governance.

In the **discussion among the panellists**, the following arguments were presented:

William Lafferty argued that there is a massive misconception of democracy as a fixed system that will work for all time. According to him, the single most important issue that hinders SD implementation across Europe is competitive party politics. If political will is crucial for achieving SD, then the question needs to be asked if this political will for SD transcends party politics? What Member States face is that with every new government, new policy strategies and action plans are developed without paying attention to the previous government’s strategies. Therefore, he calls for a radical new alignment of democratic forms that also need to be effective. Generally, SD strategies are the single most promising communicative steering document for SD, but they also need to address trade-offs between policy sectors and decisions.

Jan de Smedt said that SD strategies are important documents but they tend to become “sleeping beauties” too often. Therefore, he identified the need to bring the strongest points of SD strategies to the attention of politicians and stakeholders, rather than to refer to the complexity of SD. This also means that long-term objectives of SD strategies need to be adjusted to short-term political elections cycles. Moreover, SD strategies need to refer to sectoral policy strategies.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes mentioned the importance of thinking beyond 2020 as a reference time-frame for SD policy-making – this also applies to the discussions at Rio+20. Most politicians and stakeholders tend to be caught in the “not in my term” argument. In addition, a strong and responsible opposition is needed in governments and for policy-making.

Stefan Bauernfeind pointed to the challenge of how to transfer policy strategies to living and working political documents—or, in other words, how to achieve political commitment for policy strategies. He argued that in Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel is very much in favour of SD, but it seems difficult to create ownership of SD at the EU level.

Jörg Mayer-Ries mentioned that SD governance should be the platform for exploring trade-offs between different policy goals. A strong message from this session is also that it is necessary to more deeply investigate the relationship of democracy/transparency and SD.

## Panel 2 – The Political Perspective

The panel consisted of

- Duncan Johnstone, Policy Coordinator, Unit on Strategic Objective Solidarity, Secretariat-General, European Commission
- Andreas Jung, Chair of the Committee for Sustainable Development at the German Parliament
- Jan Dusík, Deputy Director and Officer-in-Charge, UNEP Regional Office for Europe

**Duncan Johnstone** (Secretariat-General, European Commission), who has the duty at SecGen to follow all initiatives and work undertaken by DG Environment, as well as to follow SD in his unit, argued that a reflection on the state of SD governance depends on the level one is talking about. Generally, the European Commission has a stable framework that is the EU Treaty. As SD is part of the Treaty, it is considered to be important in the policy process at the EU level. Over the last years, mechanisms like the Impact Assessment have been developed to explicitly cover SD in every policy proposal at the EU level. He believes that SD is addressed fairly comprehensively at the EU level, but that things look differently at the national level, and one can see a lot of frustration growing there. It seems, Mr. Johnstone pointed out, that the EU SDS has not been translated into concrete actions on the ground. At the EU level, however, the EU SDS has been immensely important: the Impact Assessment has been developed and applied, the 7 key challenges have been taken up, etc. Now, it seems that we are at a cross road on how to proceed with the EU SDS. He argued that actions towards SD and their quality are important, whereas the label of a strategy is less so – in other words, what gets delivered and implemented is most important. The Europe 2020 Strategy is still being developed and, therefore, presents an opportunity to integrate SD issues at the Member States level. The EU SDS has usually been taken down from the shelves only every two years for the progress reports. The Europe 2020 process is now much more dynamic and powerful, so SD should be integrated in this process and delivered on the ground.

**Andreas Jung** (Member of the German Parliament) pointed out that on SD issues, there are very close positions and cooperation between the German Government and the German Parliament. The SD Committee at the German Parliament works across committees and discusses SD as a specific cross-sectoral approach. The EU SDS is also discussed intensively at the SD Committee, and there are some worries, as they believe an impulse for SD policy-making in Europe is needed. Mr. Jung argued that the EU SDS should be the guiding document for the Europe 2020 Strategy, and a review and renewal of the EU SDS are required. In the future, a better coordination between the EU SDS and NSDSs of Member States as well as better progress reporting is needed. The latter should, for instance, reflect on the different levels of SD implementation regarding topics and Member States. Moreover, he mentioned that SD indicators have been developed by Eurostat with the inclusion of stakeholders, but they are not binding among the Member States.

**Jan Dusík** (UNEP Regional Office for Europe) identified three difficulties in SD governance: the global setting and international SD governance; how to achieve better coherence between the three pillars of SD; and how to improve national level implementation and stakeholder involvement. Mr Dusík pointed out that the Copenhagen Climate Summit and the economic crisis provided a new framework for SD. He also argued that the Europe 2020 Strategy generally continues the Lisbon Strategy approach, and mainly focuses on economic and employment issues. Moreover, Europe 2020 has a stronger political weight as it is led by Heads of State and/or Ministries of Economic Affairs, whereas the SD strategies are usually in the competence of the rather weak Ministries of Environment. He pointed out that important hallmarks of SD governance at the moment are the economic/financial crisis, short-term election periods, and the focus on Europe 2020. Mr Dusík argued that what is needed to improve SD governance is (a) a de-

environmentalisation of the SD debate, (b) a de-climatisation of the environmental pillar of SD, and (c) a composite indicator to balance GDP.

In the **discussion among the panellists**, the following arguments were presented:

Duncan Johnstone argued that SD is in the EU Treaty and this has thus to be taken into account by all DGs when preparing policy proposals. Therefore, the principles of SD are ingrained in the policy machinery of the European Commission. The situation at the Member States level is rather difficult and there is a lot to learn about how to improve the coordination between ministries. In terms of leadership, he argued that one policy strategy cannot include everything, but can only provides a certain direction – implementation of strategy objectives is most important. Mr. Johnstone also argued that, in the long-term, NSDS will no longer be necessary. As can be seen in various communications by the European Commission, reporting on SD and resource efficiency will be part of the Europe 2020 process.

Andreas Jung informed the participants that the SD Committee of the German Parliament communicates with other parliaments to share their position on SD, yet, it is difficult to convince colleagues. In the European Parliament, an SD Committee was seen as not necessary, following the argument that SD issues are already discussed in all other committees. The German SD Committee invites MPs of other Member State parliaments to share experiences on SD policy-making (GLOBE-Europe network).

Jan Dusík said that the difference between Rio 1992 and Rio+20 is the stronger involvement of stakeholders in the preparation of the meeting in 2012. The role of the sub-national level will be increasingly important because SD implementation often happens at lower levels of government.

## Plenary Discussion

After the two panel discussions, there was a lively debate among the workshop participants and with the panellists about general and specific SD governance issues. We summarize the discussion below:

### ***Impact assessment and precautionary principle***

Viktoria Bolla (Eurostat) mentioned that the Impact Assessment at the European level is an ex-ante evaluation process that is applied for policy proposals. However, this would not guarantee that policies are derived from these proposals or strategies. She asked whether there is any ex-post evaluation on SD policy implementation planned.

Duncan Johnstone (SecGen, European Commission) replied that a unit within SecGen exists that looks into ex-post evaluations, and a pilot project has recently been started on water policy. Over time, it is expected to undertake an ex-post evaluation of “old” policies when new policy proposals are developed.

William Lafferty (ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research) argued that two issues are important in SD governance. On the one hand, Art. 11 of the EU Treaty clearly says that environmental concerns have to be integrated into all other policy areas. This legal aspect should be strengthened. On the other hand, balancing and cohesion is the mantra of SD implementation, but the important “precautionary principle” is in most cases not applied in SD policy.

Duncan Johnstone replied that horizontal integration is a crucial aspect of SD implementation, and all three pillars of SD need to be treated in an integrated way. On the EU level, this is ensured by applying

the Impact Assessment procedure. The precautionary principle is still used to justify certain policy proposals, so it is still alive and kicking, but no proposals have been put forward to renew the precautionary principle from its initial form of 1992.

### ***Stakeholder participation***

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes (ANPED) asked if the European Commission is going to upgrade the involvement of civil society in the Europe 2020 process. Moreover, he suggested starting a public discussion on Rio+20 to raise awareness and momentum for the conference in June 2012.

Andreas Jung (German MP) argued that Rio+20 is an opportunity to discuss SD issues with various stakeholder groups, e.g. what does SD mean for society in practice. Rio+20 could also be a topic for discussion in parliaments all over the world – they could create an impulse for the conference by focussing on important and practical SD issues.

### ***Review of the EU SDS***

Christian Doering (German Federal Foreign Office) asked about the position of the European Commission as regards the review of the EU SDS in 2011 which is requested in the EU SDS.

Duncan Johnstone (SecGen, European Commission) replied that, to his knowledge, there is nothing in the pipeline for including the EU SDS review in the Council Conclusions of December 2011. However, it might be helpful to include the EU SDS, also regarding the preparation for Rio+20. He argued that the EU SDS and Europe 2020 are very similar: they may have different emphases, but they are going along the same path. He also pointed to the general importance of having coherence between the EU and national policy strategies. He concluded by mentioning that what really matters is implementation: what is decided on the EU level should be implemented in the Member States.

Jan de Smedt (EEAC) pointed out that, even though there is a parallel structure between the EU SDS and NSDSs, little push comes from the European level to steer the governance of achieving EU SDS objectives at the national level and to make sure NSDSs are in line with the EU SDS. Moreover, the economic and fiscal crises are in the spotlight with, it seems, very little room for SD policy.

Jan Dusík (UNEP Regional Office for Europe) argued that, in preparation to Rio+20, the EU should reflect on what has been achieved in Europe on SD over the last 20 years, including a review on what has been achieved by the EU SDS. And he asked why the EU SDS and Europe 2020 are dealt with in different Council meetings.

Elisabeth Freytag (Austrian Ministry of Environment) replied that the reason for dealing with the EU SDS at a separate Council meeting goes back to 2006 when it was felt that SD would get more attention if the December Councils focuses on it exclusively.

### ***Relationship between the EU SDS and the Europe 2020 Strategy***

Duncan Johnstone (SecGen, European Commission) said that all policies developed and implemented at the EU level need to be consistent with the EU Treaty. Therefore, the Europe 2020 Strategy aims to implement what is in the Treaty, including SD. One could, therefore, ask if there is an added-value to have the EU SDS as another policy strategy implementing the Treaty. The main issue right now is to have focus and deliver policies. For instance, he argued, the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme (EAP)

includes an endless list of actions and it is thus easy to lose focus. The Europe 2020 Strategy has only 5 main targets where action is most important.

Viktoria Bolla (Eurostat) pointed out that the question will be, “How much change will the Europe 2020 targets achieve in other policy areas?”, especially in the context of SD. The definition of priority targets would be one thing, but achieving them and fostering change is greater challenge.

Keit Parts (Government Office, Estonia) asked how the EC can make sure that a successful and efficient implementation mechanism is developed for the various policy strategies, e.g. Europe 2020, EU SDS, Flagship Initiatives, etc.?

Duncan Johnstone (SecGen, European Commission) replied that it is not foreseen to establish a separate governance mechanism for the EU SDS. The governance mechanism for Europe 2020 has been set up firmly. What is more, the Council and the Member States are not interested in more reporting on different EU strategies – this was the main reason for streamlining reporting. He argued that one way of strengthening SD is to bring it into the Europe 2020 process. He also mentioned that there were long discussions within the European Commission on another EU SDS review, but the Commission finally decided to include a paragraph in the Rio+20 Communication instead of having a separate EU SDS review. However, there will be the EU SDS Monitoring Report by Eurostat published later this year.

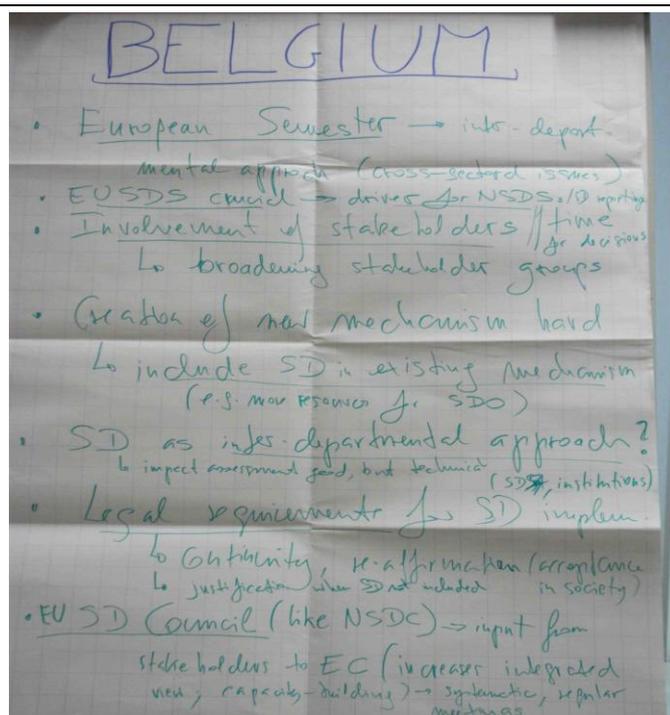
## Session 2: Experiences with SD policy & governance at the EU and Member States level

Session 2 focussed on concrete experiences made with SD policy & governance on the different political levels. The session was kicked off by an interactive format in which national representatives of three countries (Belgium, Finland, and Germany) presented their experiences in the form of “country islands”. Participants were invited to go to two country islands in this 1-hour session. Each half hour was divided into (a) a short presentation about the respective national experiences, (b) a discussion among participants, and (c) a collection of mechanisms/tools that could be applied at the EU level.

In the following, we present the results of each “country island” on mechanisms/tools that could be applied at the European level.

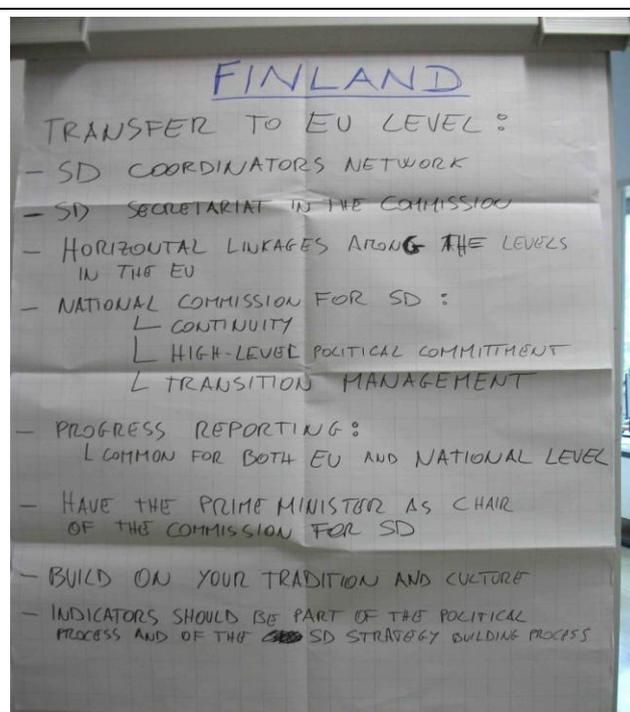
## Belgium

- European Semester: interdepartmental approach (cross-sectoral issues)
- EU SDS crucial: driver for NSDSs/SD reporting
- Involvement of stakeholders: broadening stakeholder groups, but: time for taking decisions increases
- Creation of new mechanism hard: include SD in existing mechanisms (e.g. more resources for EESC's SD Observatory)
- SD as inter-departmental approach? Impact assessment good, but technical (SEAs, institutions)
- Legal requirements for SD implementation: continuity, re-affirmation (acceptance in society), justification when SD is not included
- SD council on the EU level (like NSDC): input from stakeholders to EC (increase integrated view, capacity building), systematic and regular meetings



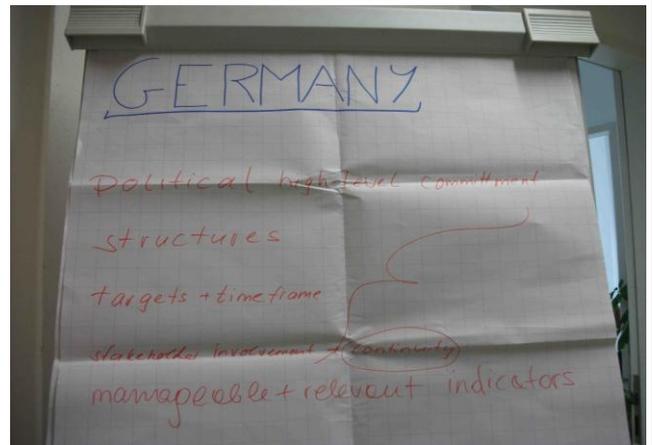
## Finland

- SD coordinators network
- SD secretariat in the Commission
- Horizontal linkages among levels/structures/committees in the EU
- National Commission for SD:
  - Continuity
  - High-level political commitment
  - Transition management
- Progress reporting: common both for the EU and the National level
- Have the Prime Minister as Chair of the National Commission for SD
- Build on your tradition and culture
- SD Indicators should be part of the political process and the SD strategy building process



## Germany

- Political commitment
- Structures
- Targets + timeframes
- Stakeholders involvement + continuity
- Manageable and relevant indicators



## Plenary Discussion

After the presentation of the results of the “country islands”, the participants discussed the results in a plenary discussion.

Jan Gustav Strandenaes (ANPED) emphasised the similarity among the three different “country islands”, such as the high-level political commitment and the importance of continuity. He also pointed out that inter-disciplinary approaches are crucial for SD. Another important issue that was mentioned: national SD policy should be translated into local action for municipalities, as it happens in Sweden and Denmark, and this may be duplicated in other European countries.

Joerg Mayer-Ries (German Ministry of Environment) mentioned that all the results of the “country islands” seem crucial for a good strategy processes, especially for SD strategies.

Stefan Bauernfeind (German Federal Chancellery) stated that SD should be cross-cutting among all ministries, but it should also be translated in concrete implementation steps by all ministries.

William Lafferty (ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research) then focused the attention on the issue of indicators that should be more dynamic, especially those related to decoupling. He also stressed the necessity of going back to the two very core principles of SD. On the one hand, we should maintain the ecological limits (environmental pillar) and, on the other hand, reduce poverty towards justice and equity between north and south (social pillar). He argued that “balancing” the 3 pillars of SD is not sufficient. In order to guarantee that SD objectives are implemented with a long-term orientation – and thus preventing incoming government from changing course – he pointed to the importance of laws and regulations.

Inge Paulini (German Advisory Council on Global Change) put the attention on the necessity for a stronger involvement of societal stakeholders and for an SD council at the EU level, building on the

experiences from the “country islands”, e.g. Belgium and Finland. In addition, she mentioned the need to understand how to increase political involvement in SD.

Viktoria Bolla (Eurostat) stressed how interesting the Finnish “country islands” was for her and pointed out the importance of SecGen of the European Commission in implementing SD at the European level.

Jörg Mayer-Ries (German Ministry of Environment), in closing the first workshop day, mentioned that several arguments presented suggest putting the focus of SD again on environmental issues. Moreover, other issues that were mentioned as important for SD governance are a reflection of the international SD debate in Europe, and issues of transparency, democracy, systematically long-term orientation, and participation and their specific relation to SD. He also pointed to the importance of horizontal and vertical integration for SD governance.

### Session 3: Future development and role of institutions/mechanisms

The main goal of the final session of the workshop was, as **Jörg Mayer-Ries** (German Ministry of Environment) put it in his recap of the first day, to make concrete proposals for the future of SD governance in Europe. Session 3 was kicked off by a keynote presentation on the future perspectives and requirements of SD policy and governance in Europe as well as some background on the role of institutions/mechanisms for SD governance by the ESDN Steering Group. This was followed by interactive parallel discussion groups that worked on future requirements for SD governance. After the presentation of the discussion group results, the participants engaged in a plenary discussion. The workshop was closed with a reflection on the workshop itself and further steps that will be taken by the ESDN Steering Group.

#### **Keynote on future perspectives and requirements of SD policy & governance in Europe**

The keynote was held by **Miranda Schreurs** (Professor at the Environmental Policy Research Centre, Free University of Berlin). She started by saying that, due to the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference, there are a lot of reasons to think about SD in general. She pointed out that quite a lot has been achieved on SD over the years and tangible progress has been achieved, e.g. SD has achieved a progress on the EU level on how to integrate different policy sectors, SD has created an opportunity to think about future development and next generation, NSDS have developed national capacities on SD and have raised awareness on SD in general, SD indicators have been developed, etc. However, a lot still needs to be done and there is still some homework to do.

Professor Schreurs pointed out that, when looking at the big picture, SD has not yet been mainstreamed in all policy activities: e.g. the bank crisis does not suggest that a stable financial system has been developed; poverty issues are rising in industrialised countries; unemployment rates are mounting in many countries; etc. Furthermore, she argued that the Europe 2020 Strategy is not sufficient and we need to go further. In particular, planetary limits and resource boundaries need to be taken into account – we need to know more about our limitations and take decisions accordingly. This also implies a stronger integration of scientific evidence in policy-making. Ms. Schreur noted that public awareness and acceptance of SD by the broader public needs education and a stronger voice of societal stakeholders in the political debates. The understanding of what SD is and what priorities should be set may differ from country to country, but a general understanding of SD requires education and

information. Moreover, most policy strategies are rather short-term (2020), but long-term thinking and orientation (2050) are urgently required.

At the end of her keynote, Ms. Schreurs mentioned that there are many questions still unanswered on how to best address SD in the context of consumption, changing people's lifestyles, mechanisms/instruments needed for governance, etc. She said that SD may need similar mechanisms as, for instance, the Davos World Economic Meeting – a high-level meeting that gets strong media coverage and thus provides input for societal discussions. Furthermore, she suggested that National SD Councils should advise the Europe Commission and European Parliaments (stakeholder involvement) and that a “radar system for SD” would be required – a prominent SD report for every year.

### **Q & A Session**

Elisabeth Freytag (Austrian Ministry of Environment) asked how high-level commitment for a policy strategy can be achieved in practice. The Europe 2020 Strategy was maybe a step in the right direction for achieving high-level commitment, but this is not enough for SD.

Miranda Schreurs (Free University of Berlin) answered that it would be important to have a policy strategy that moves with time and takes changes into account. The Europe 2020 Strategy includes a lot of important issues, but it also lack a lot in terms of SD. The EU SDS should be the framework for an ongoing process that does not stop with time.

William Lafferty (ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research) asked about the status of National SD Councils in Europe.

Miranda Schreurs replied that, currently, a lot of re-structuring on SD advisory systems is taking place, and SD Councils have been hit by that development, which means that the number of NSDCs is declining. This leads to a paradox situation: although SD challenges are increasing, the number of NSDCs as advisory and stakeholder institutions is decreasing. It is of prime importance, in general, to keep SD on the EU policy agenda.

Jan Dusík (UNEP Regional Office for Europe) argued that the environmental pillar of SD (e.g. climate change) is getting attention, but what about the whole concept of SD?

Miranda Schreurs noted that climate change is strongly related to economic and energy issues and thus an important SD issue. For instance, questions about natural resources have been often left out in the past because we thought they are boundless – but the discussion on limited resources will increase. Nevertheless, she argued that keeping a focus on SD as an integrated concept is important. SD is a strategy towards a Europe that is a desirable place to live and leave behind for the next generation, a place that is competitive because it addresses resource use, etc.

Rico De Faria (GOAL Network) argued that it is important how SD is communicated to people so that they can get the message and meaning of the concept. He underlined that it is important to talk about people and about how they think, how they value things.

Miranda Schreurs argued that SD is always portrayed as a broad and complex concept – but it is also simple if we take care of the environment and integrated it into all other sectors. It becomes challenges when we talk about governance of SD, which is important and should include the civil society.

Jörg Mayer-Ries (German Ministry of Environment), in summarizing the keynote and Q&A, pointed out the need for reflecting planetary boundaries in SD policy and governance, the importance of designing policy strategies as learning cycles (e.g. the EU SDS needs to be developed into a learning strategy that can evolve with societal challenges), and the communication of SD to politicians and civil society.

### Parallel discussion groups

As introduction to the parallel discussion groups, **Elisabeth Freytag** (Austrian Ministry of Environment) and **Jörg Mayer-Ries** (German Ministry of Environment) mentioned that the objective is to go into more detail on the basis of what was discussed on day 1. Discussion should focus on (a) the necessary mechanisms, principles and institutions for SD governance in Europe, and (b) the role of the ESDN in SD governance (e.g. delivering informal progress reports, support peer reviews, organise SD coordinators meetings, etc.). Based on a matrix developed by Jörg Mayer-Ries, the participants were invited to split into parallel discussion groups and discuss the pre-filled matrix and add new items. Please find the matrix, including the results of the discussion groups, below.

	<i>EU Government Commission</i>	<i>EU Government Parliament, Council, ...</i>	<i>European Non-Government</i>	<i>Member States Government</i>	<i>Member States Non-Government</i>	<i>Other levels/actors UN, Regional, ...</i>
<i>Mechanisms...</i>	<b>Vertical Integration</b>	- SDS Coordinators Group/Network (constitutional meeting with SD champions from EP, EC, ESDN, EEAC...)	- Committee of the Regions (CoR)		- SDS Coordinators Group/Network - SD Network of MPs (e.g. Globe-Europe)	- Committee of the Regions (CoR)
	<b>Top level commitment</b>	- Secretariat for SD network - Inclusion of SD in the European Semester - SD input by relevant DGs to European Semester - Stronger commitment of EC Commissioners towards SD	- Permanent SD WG within Council's structure		- SD as goal in all European National Constitutions - National cross-party consensus on SD	
	<b>Target setting</b>					
	<b>Target Monitoring (Indicators)</b>		- Using Eurostat "Citizens guide" to measure SD	- Strengthening role of the Joint Research Center (JRC), EEA and Eurostat in SD indicator work		
	<b>Ex post Policy Evaluation</b>		- Stronger involvement of Court of Auditors (SD auditing)		- Progress Reports - Stronger involvement of Court of Auditors (SD auditing) - Peer reviews using OECD work/structures (potential role for ESDN)	- ESDN Review of EU-SDS (based on MS Progress Reports)
	<b>Focusing</b>					
	<b>Horizontal Integration, Trade-off</b>	- Interdepartmental European Semester	- SD Council at the European Parliament - Revitalization of EPRG (Environmental Policy Review Group)			
	<b>Impact assessment</b>					
	<b>Financial Markets Regulation</b>		- Directives and rules to strengthen SD in general			
	<i>...concerning specific issues, Principles ...</i>	<b>De-Environmentalisation vs Environmentalisation</b>				
<b>Defining Ecological Limits</b>		- Apply Ecological Footprint method				
<b>International Justice, Poverty</b>			- Regulations and directives to strengthen international justice			
<b>Democracy, Participation, Transparency</b>				- Establishment of European SD Council	- Stronger role for NSDC - NSDCs disseminate SD best-practice at Rio+20 and preparatory events	- Usage of social media of SD debates and awareness raising
<b>Good Governance</b>		- SD Management rules (targets and indicators)				
<b>Europe 2020 implementation</b>					- NSDC inputs to NRPs	

## Plenary Discussion

Jan De Smedt (EEAC) suggested that National SD Councils should, on the national level, provide comments on the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) that aim to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy in the Member States. This could open NRPs towards environmental and social issues and allow for a more pronounced cross-sectoral approach of NRPs.

Claudia Kabel (German NGO Forum on Environment and Development) argued that in her discussion group, the importance of regulations, rules and directives was intensively discussed. A legal framework for SD from the EU level could put pressure on Member States for implementing SD policy. In addition, management rules and structures on how to operationalize SD would be necessary for the public administration. Moreover, she mentioned that the Ecological Footprint was found a useful indicators for SD and that the role of social media in communicating SD to the broader public should not be underestimated.

Tim Bogaert (Belgian Federal Public Planning Service for Sustainable Development) said that what we do on SD needs to be communicated to the public, and this communication needs to be part of the EU SDS process. Moreover, he argued that an SD coordinators network needs to be given a higher profile and that the services of such a network need to be clarified. He suggested that the ESDN brings together people for a “radar of SD” on the European level. Currently, a lot happens on an ad-hoc basis, but a systematic approach of integrating SD in EU policy-making after Rio+20 should provide a new impetus for SD governance in Europe. In addition, he argued for a constitutional meeting of SD policy-makers after Rio+20.

William M. Lafferty (ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research) pointed out that more push for a review of the EU SDS need to be made, possibly by the ESDN. He argued that is says a lot about the European Commission that it has not submitted anything to the Rio+20 zero document (deadline for submissions is 1 November).

Erzsébet Gergely (Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development) suggested that the ESDN could initiate a meeting of European Commission officials to organise a communication campaign for SD before the Rio+20 Conference.

Viktoria Bolla (Eurostat) informed the participants that the Eurostat EU SDS Monitoring Report will be published in autumn 2011. In 2012, two important documents will be released by Eurostat: a citizens' guide about the EU SDS and an assessment of SD achievements over the last 20 years in Europe as part of the preparation for Rio+20.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes (ANPED) argued that a formal mechanism for integrating civil society in the EU policy machinery on SD is necessary. He also informed the participants that many developing countries try to revive their National SD Councils, and input/best practice experiences from Europe would be welcome.

Jan Dusík (UNEP Regional Office for Europe) pointed out that a side event in Rio for National SD Councils is not ideal. However, there is regional preparatory meeting in Geneva in December 2011 that would be better suited for a side event.

Sauli Rouhinen (Finnish Ministry of Environment) said that there is not one model for National SD Councils – they have different roles and models. Therefore, it would be useful to have an overview of differences, similarities and best practice examples from the EEAC.

## Reflection on the Workshop and next steps

Several issues were mentioned by the participants when reflecting on the workshop:

- Participants found the workshop very interesting and useful. It was suggested to broaden the scope of participants to other departments and sectors, e.g. persons responsible for NRPs in the Member States.
- The information provided and the exchange of experiences organised was very useful for the participants. It is an added-value of the ESDN to organise the exchange with the European Commission on SD issues.
- It was interesting to see a positive yet critical view on what is going on regarding SD governance in Europe.
- The working groups and interactive discussions were found to be important for exchange and useful to gain new ideas.
- Suggestions were made that ESDN gets involved in the Rio+20 preparations and that social media (e.g. Facebook) is increasingly used by ESDN.

In concluding the workshop, **Elisabeth Freytag** (Austrian Ministry of Environment) informed the participants that the ESDN Steering Group will talk to the Council Secretariat about the EU SDS review. In addition, the ESDN Steering Group will write a letter to Catherine Day to inform her about the workshop results and views of the ESDN on SD governance in Europe. Generally, when no EU SDS review will take place and the strategy is not renewed, the ESDN will engage in bringing more SD into the Europe 2020 Strategy process. Overall, the ESDN focuses on SD governance in Europe and will continue to make sure that SD plays an important role in the EU.

## Annex 1: List of participants

No.	Name	Institution	Country
1	Bachmann, Günther	German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)	Germany
2	Bartus, Gabor	National Council for Sustainable Development (NFFT)	Hungary
3	Bauernfeind, Stefan	Federal Chancellery	Germany
4	Berger, Gerald	ESDN Office	Austria
5	Bogaert, Tim	Federal Public Planning Service for Sustainable Development	Belgium
6	Bolla, Viktoria	Eurostat	Luxembourg
7	de Bruijn, Dirk Cornelis	Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment	Netherlands
8	De Faria, Rico	GOAL Network	Austria
9	De Smedt, Jan	Federal Council for Sustainable Development & EEAC	Belgium
10	Dewitz, Anja	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	Germany
11	Doering, Christian	Federal Foreign Office	Germany
12	Doeswijk, Lianne	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	Netherlands
13	Dusík, Jan	UNEP Regional Office for Europe	Switzerland
14	Elliott, Russell	Countryside Council for Wales	Wales, UK
15	Freytag, Elisabeth	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria
16	Gergely, Erzsébet	Ministry of Rural Development	Hungary
17	Hamhuis, Dick	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	Netherlands
18	Hillebrand, Ron	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	Netherlands
19	Hönerbach, Frank	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	Germany
20	Johnstone, Duncan	Secretariat-General, European Commission	Belgium
21	Jung, Andreas	Committee for SD at the German Parliament	Germany
22	Kabel, Claudia	German NGO Forum on Environment and Development	Germany
23	Kok, Marcel	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL)	Netherlands
24	Kramer, Andrea	German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)	Germany
25	Lafferty, William M.	ProSus Perspectives and SINTEF Energy Research AS	Norway
26	Mayer-Ries, Jörg	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	Germany
27	Müller-Kraenner, Sascha	The Nature Conservancy in Europe	Germany
28	Narodoslawsky, Michael	Graz University of Technology	Austria
29	Nedeljković, Ana	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration	Serbia
30	Ooms, Michiel	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	Netherlands
31	Parts, Keit	Estonian Government Office	Estonia
32	Paulini, Inge	German Advisory Council on Global Change	Germany
33	Pearce, Catherine	World Future Council	Belgium
34	Pedersen, Thomas	Ministry of Environment	Denmark

	Nicolai		
35	Piciga, Darja	Government Office of Climate Change	Slovenia
36	Pisano, Umberto	ESDN Office	Austria
37	Pivčević Novak, Branka	Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction	Croatia
38	Rouhinen, Sauli	Ministry of the Environment	Finland
39	Schreurs, Miranda	Free University of Berlin & EEAC	Germany
40	Sørensen, John Bæk	Ministry of Environment	Denmark
41	Spangenberg, Joachim	Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI)	Germany
42	Strandenaes, Jan Gustav	Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED)	Norway
43	Tumielewicz, Szymon	Ministry of the Environment	Poland
44	Vaht, Ülle	Ministry of the Environment	Estonia
45	van Zomeren, Marit	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Netherlands