



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

**Public consultation
Review of the EU Sustainable development strategy**

**[With comments from Comhar,
the National Sustainable Development Partnership
Ireland]**

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REVIEW OF THE EU SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Note: This is a working document prepared by the Commission services as basis for this public consultation. It does not commit the Commission in any way, nor does it prejudge the final form of any decision taken by the Commission.

This document launches a public consultation on the European Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS). The results of this consultation will be an important input into the Commission's review of the strategy, which will start later this year.

European Heads of State adopted the current EU SDS in June 2001 based on a Commission Communication issued in May 2001¹. In the run-up to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in August 2002, this Strategy was completed by a Communication on the external dimension of sustainable development².

As a new Commission takes office in November, it is time to review the Strategy. Since its adoption in 2001 a number of significant changes have occurred:

- The enlargement of the European Union to 25 Member States;
- Terrorist attacks;
- EU commitment to a number of global initiatives and targets³;
- Further globalisation and changes in EU and world economy, such as a downturn in EU growth, concerns about the competitiveness of European industry and de-industrialisation⁴, strains on resources in conjunction with the emergence of some developing countries as key economic players;
- Persistent and increasingly apparent signs of environmental problems in the EU and globally, such as the recent severe weather events – likely to be tangible signs of climate change.

The Commission's review will assess where the strategy has worked and where it has not as well as what needs to be done over the next five-year Commission term in order to achieve further progress towards long-term sustainable development.

¹ COM(2001)264 final of 15 May 2001

² COM(2002)82 final of 13 February 2002

³ These include the Johannesburg summit, Monterrey conference and the Doha negotiation round [link to web pages on each of these issues].

⁴ See the Commission Communication "Fostering structural change: an industrial policy for an enlarged Europe" COM(2004)274 final of 20.04.2004

Please have a look at our website where you can find there most of the documents referred to in this paper: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/legis_en.htm

Why this consultation?

The aim of this consultation is to gather **your** views on the European Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS), its past achievements, and where we should take it from here. The consultation describes the EU SDS as adopted in 2001 and asks a number of questions on its scope, content and achievements.

The questionnaire is structured as follows:

1. Policy context
2. Sustainability and the EU SDS
3. Taking stock of progress since 2001
 - Part A. Reviewing the six priority issues
 - Part B. Reviewing changes in the way we make policies
 - Part C. Measuring and reporting on our progress
4. Linking the EU SDS to global and national strategies

Have your say. How to respond to the consultation

As mentioned on the web-site, this public consultation consists of two main steps. By now you have most probably already responded to Step 1, which consist of a short on-line questionnaire with general “tick-the box” questions about the Sustainable Development Strategy.

This consultation document represents Step 2. Building on Step 1, it includes further background information as well as more open and detailed questions about the different parts of the EU SDS. The aim of this second step is to allow you to make more in-depth comments on the different parts of the EU SDS. All contributions are welcome, although this part particularly targets stakeholders and experts that are more familiar with the EU SDS.

This consultation is available in English, French and German. Further information is provided through the website.

The contributions for this part should be sent to the Commission in writing, preferably by e-mail, to:

E-mail address:

SG-CONSULTATION-SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT@cec.eu.int

or to:

Fax: +32-2-296.31.19

Postal address: European Commission, BREY 07/204, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Contributions can be sent until 31 October 2004.

For background information you can consult relevant documents on our website through the menu option "**Key documents**".

For more information on the activities undertaken by the EU in priority areas since the launch of the EU SDS in 2001, please consult our web-site through the menu option "[Legislation and Initiatives on Sustainable Development](#)".

The results of this consultation will serve as input to the Commission's review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which is expected to be completed by January 2005. In line with good practice on stakeholder consultation, the Commission will publish the responses on its website, together with a summary, identifying who has said what and how the contributions will be taken into account. Would you prefer your comments to remain anonymous?

YES NO

Please tell us about yourself

Note: This consultation is subject to a Data Privacy Statement (press ctrl + click to access)

I am replying (compulsory)	
<input type="checkbox"/> As an individual <small>(please continue in this column)</small>	X On behalf of an organisation or institution <small>(please continue in this column)</small>
Sex* <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female	Name of the organisation or institution Comhar – The National Sustainable Development Partnership
Age range	Name of contact person: Noel Casserly
Profession	Country where your organisation is based Ireland
Country of residence	Number of employees/members: 25 Council members plus Secretariat Staff www.comhar-nsdp.ie
Email address	Email address Comhar@environ.ie

1. POLICY CONTEXT

The EU has two broad cross cutting strategies. The first is the ten-year **Lisbon Strategy**, which was adopted in March 2000. It aims for the EU “*to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*” (Lisbon Presidency Council Conclusions, March 2000). In 2001 at the Gothenburg Council an environmental dimension was added to this objective. The underlying idea of Lisbon is that a stronger economy will drive job creation alongside social and environmental policies that ensure sustainable development and social inclusion.

The second is the longer term **Sustainable Development Strategy**. Adopted in 2001, it aims to achieve a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. Its basic aim is to ensure that economic growth, environmental quality and social inclusion go hand in hand, thereby increasing citizens’ welfare. To achieve this, the strategy puts major emphasis on coherent policy making and management of trade offs between conflicting objectives and interests. In 2002 the Commission introduced an Impact Assessment process where for all its major policy proposals the main expected economic, social and environmental impacts are assessed.

These two strategies complement each other. The Sustainable Development Strategy covers the long-term issues (inter-generational equity), the international dimension (in particular distributive issues between North and South), and the interlinkages between policy areas (policy coherence, policy integration, mechanisms to inform policy decisions on trade-offs). It offers a vision of society as a whole and is a guiding principle for all EU policies.

The Lisbon strategy focuses primarily on the medium term (2010). It sets out a process to achieve quantitative targets as regards economic growth, employment, greater social cohesion - and since 2001 environmental protection- and their drivers (research and innovation, skills, market structures, productivity), and on coordination between the EU and national levels.

The Lisbon and the Sustainable development strategies build on the EU’s sectoral strategies, policies, action plans and programmes covering a number of policy areas including the environment, employment, social affairs, agriculture, trade, enterprise, information and communication technologies and research, internal market, fisheries, economic and financial affairs, development, and transport and energy.

2. THE EU'S OVERALL APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

Defining what we mean by sustainable development

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

This is the widely accepted definition⁵ used as the basis of the 2001 EU Sustainable Development Strategy. Sustainable development means taking on a model of development where economic growth, increased social cohesion and a better environment are sought together. In so doing, we set out a vision that emphasises the need to achieve a balance between economic, social and environmental needs. Achieving this vision will require profound changes in our economic and social structures, and in our patterns of consumption and production.

It is important to keep in mind that sustainable development also aims to balance the needs of future generations - our children, our grandchildren and their children - versus the needs of existing generations as well as the needs of local and regional – in this case the EU's needs – against global needs.

From words to deeds: the four basic components of the EU SDS

In 2001 the European Commission attempted to translate the vision of sustainable development into an operational strategy. This strategy, which was largely endorsed by the Heads of States at their meeting in Gothenburg in June 2001⁶, has the following four basic components:

- First, it sets out a broad vision of what is sustainable. In this respect, the strategy's basic message is that in the longer run the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability must go hand in hand: *“Sustainable development offers the European Union a positive long-term vision of a society that is more prosperous and more just, and which promises a cleaner, safer, healthier environment - a society which delivers a better quality of life for us, for our children, and for our grandchildren”*.
- Second, it identifies six trends that are clearly not sustainable, in other words **six priority issues** where problems arise and which pose severe or potentially irreversible threats to our well-being. These are:

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- I. CLIMATE CHANGE
 - II. PUBLIC HEALTH
 - III. POVERTY & SOCIAL EXCLUSION
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- IV. AGEING SOCIETY
 - V. MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
 - VI. MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT
-

⁵ Developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission, in 1987.

⁶ In the text that follows below, reference will be made to the objectives that were endorsed by the European Council, not those initially proposed by the Commission.

All of these require concerted action over a long period of time in order to make a difference. For each of these issues, the strategy proposes main objectives. Additionally, it sets a series of policy measures to help achieve these objectives.

Many of these trends are not confined to the EU alone: they are also – and often in a more severe way – global concerns. As such, they are highlighted in the external part of the EU's SDS published in the run-up to the Johannesburg Summit.

- The third, and arguably the most ambitious part of the strategy, seeks to **improve the way in which we make policies**. It calls for a new approach to policy-making to ensure that policies in different domains are designed to work together more **coherently** and that trade-offs between contradictory objectives are made transparent so that informed policy-decisions can be taken. This implies careful assessment of their full effects and sending the right signals to the market by **getting prices right** (i.e. by making sure that prices reflect the full environmental and social costs of goods and services). It requests that EU policy-makers take account of the **global context** and ensure that EU policies actively support efforts taken by other countries. It also calls for **investment in science and technology** to support the adjustments needed for sustainable development. Furthermore it insists on **improving communication** and mobilizing citizens and business.
- Finally, the strategy also sets out a commitment to **regular monitoring** and that the strategy would be “*comprehensively reviewed at the start of each Commission’s term of office.*”

Questions:

1. Do you agree with the EU's overall approach to sustainable development as described above?

Strongly agree agree X disagree strongly disagree uncertain

2. If yes, say why. If no, please explain how the overall approach (as opposed to individual elements of the strategy) could be improved.

Free text (max 200 words): While the overall approach is sound and there have been achievements, the review of the EU SDS should take the opportunity to identify delivery gaps, intensify implementation measures, and foster better links with national sustainable strategies. A stronger political commitment and willingness to tackle difficult issues will be essential to meet the challenges. Enhanced stakeholder participation is also needed if the revised strategy is to address the difficulty of mobilising public support for long term goals. All sectors of society must be persuaded of the need to change patterns of behaviour and consumption in order to build positive scenarios for the future. Communication of sustainable development in a more accessible way is necessary as well as the integration of sustainable development principles into the formal education system.

3. Do you think the sustainable development strategy and the Lisbon strategy complement each other in a satisfactory manner?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

4. If yes, say why. If no, say why not.

Free text (max 200 words): The processes related to the two strategies have developed in a fragmented and incoherent way. The Lisbon strategy clearly puts the focus on economic growth and reforms in order to achieve more and better jobs and social cohesion. The Gothenburg Council added an environmental dimension but this needs to be strengthened. Economic growth must be decoupled from resource depletion and the positive synergies between environment and competitiveness must be highlighted. The two strategies must be coherent with an the overarching objective of long-term sustainable development and a clear commitment to move away from unsustainable patterns of production and consumption to a new pattern of responsible competitiveness with a lighter environmental footprint, greater social justice and investment in recovery of biodiversity and environmental quality. Sustainable development objectives must permeate all policy areas of the Lisbon strategy. In this way, the Lisbon strategy can and should be an important intermediate step on the way to sustainable development, but cannot be a substitute for a long-term sustainability strategy.

3. TAKING STOCK OF PROGRESS SINCE 2001

The next two sections of this document look first at progress on the six priority issues (listed above) and secondly, at the new approach to policy-making.

REVIEWING THE SIX PRIORITY ISSUES – PART A

For each issue the document starts by recalling the unsustainable trends identified in 2001. It then states the main objectives endorsed by the European Council and provides a short summary on major actions that have been taken to achieve these objectives. It ends by highlighting new evidence regarding the issue that has since come to light. For further information the questionnaire contains links to other relevant documents.

It should be noted that data are not always available to assess developments since 2001. Furthermore, progress does also depend on the commitment of Member States to adopt and fully implement the proposed policies and measures in a timely way.

I. COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

The problem: what we said in 2001

“Emissions of greenhouse gases from human activity are causing global warming. Climate change is likely to cause more extreme events (hurricanes, floods) with severe implications for infrastructure, property, health and nature.”

Main objectives from EU SDS 2001

“The Community and the Member States are determined to meet their own commitments under the Kyoto Protocol⁷. The Commission will prepare a proposal for ratification before the end of 2001 making it possible for the Union and its Member States to fulfil their commitment to rapidly ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The European Union will work to ensure the widest possible participation of industrialised countries in an effort to ensure the entry into force of the protocol by 2002. To enhance the Union’s efforts in this area, the European Council:

- reaffirms its commitments to delivering on Kyoto targets and the realisation by 2005 of demonstrable progress in achieving these commitments; recognising that the Kyoto protocol is only a first step, it endorses the objectives set out in the sixth environmental action programme;
- furthermore reaffirms its determination to meet the indicative target for the contribution of electricity produced from renewable energy sources to gross electricity consumption by 2010 of 22% at Community level as set out in the directive on renewable energy;
- invites the European Investment Bank to promote the sustainable development strategy and to cooperate with the Commission in implementing the EU policy on climate change”.

What we have done and what we are doing

Internationally, the EU has continued to play a leading role in promoting the ratification of Kyoto and in implementing the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) commitments through the launch of the Energy Initiative and the Renewable Energy Coalition.

Within Europe, the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) - launched in 2000 - has been the key vehicle, and includes many initiatives such as directives for energy performance in buildings, renewable energy and electricity, promotion of cogeneration of heat and power and taxation of energy products. The cornerstone of the ECCP is the EU-wide allowance trading scheme for greenhouse gas emissions due to start operating on 1st January 2005. The use of alternative fuels like biofuels or hydrogen is also being promoted actively. The Intelligent Energy for Europe Programme adopted in April 2002 will promote energy efficiency and renewable energy both in the EU and in third countries.

⁷ Under the Kyoto protocol the EU has committed to reduce its average greenhouse gas emissions by 8% between 2008 and 2012 compared to 1990 levels. In June 1998, the Environmental Council agreed on an internal differentiation of target, which allocates greenhouse gas emission limitations to each Member State.

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/ New evidence on the priority issue:

The latest available data for 2002 shows that the EU 15 has achieved only a 2.9% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels. As a result, the EU is not on a linear course to meet its target of -8% by 2010. Nevertheless, in contrast to some of its main competitors the EU has taken substantial measures to reduce its emissions. But despite these efforts, a more vigorous implementation of existing and additional policies and measures by the Member States will be needed to reach the target. Energy intensity (energy consumption relative to total output) has decreased at approximately 1% per annum in the EU 15, but not sufficiently to compensate for the growth in GDP. New Member States' energy intensity remains nearly three times higher than that of the EU 15. By 2001, 14% of electricity was produced from renewable sources. The European Council has recently committed itself to strengthen its efforts to ensure that it will meet its indicative target for the EU25 of 21% by 2010.

There is a clear trend of increased occurrence of extreme weather events such as heat-waves, droughts and floods. Estimates of damage for the year 2002 indicate a loss of 25 billion Euros in Europe, although there is still uncertainty about the link to climate change.

Questions:
5. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its climate change objectives?
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Strongly agree</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>uncertain</i>
6. If no, explain why. Do you think the objectives need to be updated?
<i>Free text (max 200 words):</i> Although not yet on a linear path to meeting Kyoto commitments the EU has taken significant steps towards compliance with the establishment of an Emissions Trading System, supporting National Allocation Plans and the Linking Directive.
7. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?
<i>Free text (max 200 words)</i> The establishment of an efficient Emissions Trading System provides an economically efficient means by which emissions from the power generation and large energy intensive industry sectors of the European economy maybe curbed. The National Allocation Plans for the pilot phase of emissions trading recognised that this is the learning by doing phase with more rigorous NAPs to follow in the Kyoto period 2008-12. The Linking Directive will allow those within the system to utilise the Kyoto project mechanisms to deliver economic emission reductions should these prove more cost effective than internal measures. The EU should bring forward additional co-ordinated policies and measures that supplement cost-effective action by member states. Sectors that merit attention include renewable energy, transport, including aviation and private car use, agriculture and energy efficiency.

8. In tackling climate change, how can the EU best combine directly promoting particular technologies and giving price signals to market actors, leaving it to them to develop technological solutions?

Free text (max 200 words): The emissions trading system provides the correct framework within which economically efficient technologies can be identified developed and utilised within the trading sector of the economy. In the non-trading sector economic instruments such as taxes or subsidies should be used whereby their levels are directly related to the cost of carbon abatement as established by the cost of allowance within the trading system.

9. What role do non-EU countries have in addressing climate change and what can the EU do to encourage or assist them?

Free text (max 200 words): The Linking Directive the EU has created a situation whereby abatement activities in some non EU countries can be used to off-set emissions with the EU trading sector. This should encourage technology transfer and efficient energy use outside the EU. The use of the Kyoto flexibility mechanisms by EU member states to purchase emission reductions will also enable non members to deliver significant emission reductions. Capacity building should also be a feature of EU policy in particular with regard to the establishment of Designated National Authorities to manage and approve projects associated with the Kyoto flexibility mechanisms.

All countries with significant emissions will eventually need to take action to control their emissions if the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is to be stabilised at a level that minimises the adverse effects of climate change. In particular, the US, responsible for a quarter of the world's emissions, should take comparable action to the EU in the near future and arrest its continued emissions growth.

Developing countries are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and must take action to adapt to changing climate patterns. The EU, through bilateral Development Assistance programmes and through multilateral funds, can help developing countries in assessing their vulnerability to climate change, building capacity to adapt and taking concrete action to minimise the adverse effects of climate change.

10. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address climate change and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words): By promoting greater use of economic instruments such as emissions trading the EU has attempted to meet its Kyoto commitments in an economically efficient manner so minimising any adverse macro-economic effects of the policy. Concerted efforts by national governments to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock would not only reduce emissions from the domestic sector but would help to address an underlying cause of fuel poverty with consequent social benefits. The promotion of forestry has potential to create employment in rural areas while also improving recreational facilities.

II. PUBLIC HEALTH

The problem: what we said in 2001

“Severe threats to public health are posed by new antibiotic-resistant strains of some diseases and, potentially, the longer-term effects of the many hazardous chemicals currently in everyday use; threats to food safety are of increasing concern.”

Main objectives- from EU SDS 2001

“The European Union must respond to citizens’ concerns about the safety and quality of food, use of chemicals and issues related to outbreak of infectious diseases and resistance to antibiotics. To this end, the European Council:

- notes the Commission’s intention to present formal proposals and invites the Council and the European Parliament to adopt them, so that the chemicals policy is in place by 2004, thereby ensuring that within a generation chemicals are only produced and used in ways which do not lead to a significant impact on health and the environment;
- notes the Commission’s intention to present by the end of 2001 action plans for tackling issues related to outbreaks of infectious diseases and resistance to antibiotics;
- urges the European Parliament and the Council to profit from the substantial progress achieved and rapidly agree on the final adoption of the European Food Authority and food law regulation in order to comply with the time frame agree at the Nice and Stockholm European Councils;
- asks that the possibility of the creation of a European surveillance and early warning network on health issues be examined.”

What we have done and what we are doing

The Commission has made a proposal for a new EU regulatory framework for chemicals called REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals). REACH would require publicly available information on the properties of all chemical substances produced or imported into the EU at above 1 tonne (1000 kg) per year.

Following several food crises, a “farm to table” approach was implemented in the EU to restore consumer confidence in food products. For consumer protection, a new consumer strategy was adopted in 2002 focusing on effective enforcement and reinforced involvement of consumer organisations in EU policy-making. Under the current four year research programme, the Commission is also spending 685 million on research on food quality and safety. Joint EU surveillance and early warning networks for communicable diseases proved their worth in addressing general health threats at the time of the global outbreak of SARS in March 2003. Genomic research offers new opportunities to fight antibiotic resistance, which are being further emphasised and explored in the Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2002-2006).

In June 2003, the Commission launched an Environment and Health Strategy, developing a Community system *combining* information on the state of the environment, the ecosystem and human health. The Strategy puts special emphasis on children as their exposure and susceptibility are greater than those of adults. It was further completed with an environment and health action

plan for 2004-2010 aimed at better mapping out adverse environment and health connections. The plan will provide the basis for identifying possible measures to improve the well-being of people and obtain potential economic benefits, since spending on remedial actions and lost productivity often outweighs costs of prevention.

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/ New evidence on the issue

This is a difficult issue to tackle in statistics, and we lack consistent time series. Several studies at national level have highlighted the potential health risks associated with exposure to chemicals, even at low doses. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that every year, unhealthy environments still cause the death of over 5 million children worldwide. In laboratory samples, up to 70% of the pathogens responsible for chest infections, including pneumonia, are found to be resistant to one of the first-line antibiotics. It is estimated that about 60% of antibiotics in human medicine are prescribed for upper respiratory infections, even though the great majority are caused by viruses – against which antibiotics are ineffective

Questions:

11. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its objectives in the field of public health and food safety?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

12. If no, explain why? Do you think the objectives need to be updated?

Free text (max 200 words): Progress has been mixed. The positive developments in regard food safety, consumer information and labeling are welcome as well as the establishment of European Food Authority and the launch of the Environment and Health Strategy in 2003. The delay in finalising the REACH Directive is a matter for concern; a stronger focus on gains in the health sector rather than losses to the chemical industry is required in finalising proposals.

13. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?

Free text (max 200 words)

14. Should public health threats in non-EU countries be reflected in EU policies? If so, how? How should non-EU countries be encouraged to reflect health threats in their policies?

Free text (max 200 words)

15. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long

term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address public health threats and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words)

III. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The problem: what we said in 2001

“One in every six Europeans lives in poverty. Poverty and social exclusion have enormous direct effects on individuals such as ill health, suicide, and persistent unemployment. The burden of poverty is borne disproportionately by single mothers and older women living alone. Poverty often remains within families for generations.”

Main objectives- from EU SDS 2001

- “Make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty, raise the employment rate to 67% for January 2005 and to 70% by 2010;
- increase the number of women in employment to 57% for January 2005 and to more than 60% by 2010.
- halve by 2010 the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower secondary education who are not in further education and training”.

What we have done and what we are doing

The Member States have agreed to co-ordinate their policies for combating poverty and social exclusion by setting common objectives, designing national action plans and evaluating these using common indicators to monitor progress. The European Commission is working with the Member States to support this co-ordination process. The Member States (EU-15) have submitted National Action Plans for social inclusion⁹ already twice – in 2000 and 2003, setting out how they are tackling this problem. On the basis of the assessment of the 2003 Plans, it was concluded that countries needed to build even further on what has already been achieved.

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/ New evidence on the issue

There is no evidence of easy solutions in the field of poverty: in 2001 more than 55 million people or 15 % of the EU population was living at risk of poverty of which well over half (9%) are at persistent risk. Of particular concern is the situation in some of the new Member States, where the overall living standards are particularly low and those living on an income below the poverty threshold are at risk of severe poverty; furthermore, the socially excluded risk being left behind as the countries grow rapidly. There is evidence in several countries that income and wealth distribution has improved, but the gap between richest and poorest 20% remains high. The cumulative burden of disadvantage continues to be disproportionately borne by certain population sub-groups including single mothers, older women living alone and the unemployed.

⁹ New Member States will submit their first National Action Plan during the course of 2004. They have already prepared bilateral Joint Inclusion Memoranda (ESTAT).

Questions:

16. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its policy objectives in the field of poverty, employment, education and social exclusion?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

17. If no, explain why. Do you think the objectives need to be updated?

Free text (max 200 words): Poverty and social exclusion need to be more firmly addressed in the revised EU SDS and explicitly linked and integrated with the Lisbon objectives. According to the recent data¹⁰, the proportion of the population at risk of poverty ranges from 21% in Ireland to about 10-11% in the Netherlands, Germany and the Nordic countries. The risk of poverty is higher for particular household types – older people living alone, lone parents and ethnic minorities.

18. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?

Free text (max 200 words): Economic, environment and social policies can be mutually reinforcing. Economic development, environmental protection and enhancement, must go hand in hand with efforts to reduce poverty and social exclusion. A stronger political commitment is required to promote social integration, combat discrimination and provide comprehensive support to those that are most disadvantaged to secure the economic and social gains throughout the EU.

19. Do EU policies help address the international dimension of the issue? How do non-EU country policies help or hinder solving the issue in the EU or globally?

Free text (max 200 words): A stronger focus is needed on distributive justice and eradication of global poverty.

20. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address poverty and social exclusion and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words)

¹⁰ Referenced in *A new partnership for cohesion – convergence, competitiveness and co-operation* – European Commission, 2003

IV. AGEING SOCIETY

The problem: what we said in 2001

“While increases in life expectancy are obviously welcome, combined with low birth rates the resultant ageing of the population is likely to cause a slowdown in the rate of economic growth and threaten the quality and financial sustainability of pension schemes and public health care. Spending could increase by up to 8% of gross domestic product in many Member States between 2000 and 2040.”

Main objectives- from EU SDS 2001

- “Ensure the adequacy of pension systems as well as of health care systems and care of the elderly, while at the same time maintaining sustainability of public finances and inter-generational solidarity.
- Address the demographic challenge by raising employment rates, reducing public debt and adapting social protection systems, including pension systems
- Increase the average EU employment rate among older women and men (55-64) to 50% by 2010”.

What we have done and what we are doing

The Commission is working with Member States to prolong the working lives of older workers through reforms of the labour market and social protection policies. A target was set in 2001 as part of the Lisbon strategy for 50% of 55-64 year olds to be in work by 2010 and for the effective labour market exit age to be raised by 5 years by 2010. This means disincentives to work longer will have to be removed, lifelong learning must be available, working conditions must be improved and early retirement discouraged.

Apart from tackling the financial side, healthcare systems need to be reformed to cope with the expected demand from the increased number of elderly people. The Union is facilitating structured co-operation in this field and the exchange of good practice.

It is also promoting the use of information and communication technologies infrastructures and services to support older people, with a view to reducing the costs of care. Improving accessibility of all modes of transport for people with reduced mobility has been set as a key objective of the EU transport strategy.

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/ New evidence on the issue

The old age dependency ratio is forecast to increase from 24% in 2000 to 47% in 2050.¹¹ Birth rates are still well below replacement rates in the EU while life expectancy continues to climb. However, there is evidence that the trend towards early retirement is being reversed. Together these factors mean a slowly increasing population size but a decreasing workforce. Neither migration nor a rapid increase in birth rates can avert the sharp rise in the share of older people in the population. Active

11 The ratio of the number of elderly persons to the number of persons of working age

and healthy ageing will be the key to preventing pension and health care systems from becoming financially unsustainable.

Questions:

21. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its objectives in facing the challenges of an ageing society?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

22. If no, explain why. Do you think the objectives need to be updated?

Free text (max 200 words)

23. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?

Free text (max 200 words)

24. According to you, what would be the three most promising approaches to ensure the financial sustainability of our pension systems (e.g. raise the participation rate and/or retirement age, phase in retirement, adjust annual pay-outs, broaden the 'tax base' beyond labour income, supplement by (private) fully funded systems etc.)? Please rank in descending order of importance.

Free text (max 200 words)

25. What could be the role of immigration in alleviating the impacts of ageing societies in Europe? What impacts might this have in developing countries? How can any potential conflicts best be balanced?

Free text (max 200 words)

26. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address the challenges of an ageing society and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words)

V. MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

What we said in 2001

“The loss of biodiversity in Europe has accelerated dramatically in recent decades. Fish stocks in European waters are near collapse. Waste volumes have persistently grown faster than GDP. Soil loss and declining fertility are eroding the viability of agricultural land”.

Main objectives – from EU SDS 2001

“The relationship between economic growth, consumption of natural resources and the generation of waste must change. Strong economic performance must go hand in hand with sustainable use of natural resources and levels of waste, maintaining biodiversity, preserving ecosystems and avoiding desertification. To meet these challenges, the European Council agrees:

- that the Common Agricultural Policy and its future development should, among its objectives, contribute to achieving sustainable development by increasing its emphasis on encouraging healthy, high-quality products, environmentally sustainable production methods, including organic production, renewable raw materials and the protection of biodiversity;
- that the review of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002 should, based on a broad political debate, address the overall fishing pressure by adapting the EU fishing effort to the level of available resources, taking into account the social impact and the need to avoid over-fishing
- that the EU Integrated Product Policy aimed at reducing resource use and the environmental impact of waste should be implemented in cooperation with business;
- halting biodiversity decline with the aim to reach this objective by 2010 as set out in the sixth environmental action programme”.

What we have done and what we are doing

To achieve the EU’s target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 initiatives include the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fishery Policy (CFP), the creation of the Natura 2000 network, efforts for the development of biodiversity indicators and improved use of our development cooperation policy. A revision of the Community’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (1998) and its four Biodiversity Action Plans (2001) is currently being undertaken¹². The Commission also encourages and promotes sustainable tourism¹³

Regarding resource efficiency, actions include the EU Directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment and EU Directives to limit the use of fossil fuels, such as the Directives on energy performance of buildings the promotion of bio fuels (Directive 2003/30/EC) and the promotion of cogeneration of heat and power. The Commission has published communications on integrated product policy (IPP), on the prevention and recycling of waste and on the sustainable use of natural resources. These feed into preparations for long term strategies for waste and resource use, due in 2005. International initiatives include the EU Water Initiative – Water for Life (EUWI) as a follow up from the WSSD. The EU also participates in the work to establish a ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production.

¹² A major stakeholder conference on “Biodiversity and the EU – Sustaining Life, Sustaining Livelihoods” which took place in Malahide, Ireland from 25 to 27 May 2004, adopted a Message from Malahide including priority objectives and targets for 2010

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/New evidence

Finding appropriate indicators to measure changes in biodiversity is particularly difficult. One possible way is to consider an ad hoc indicator on wild bird populations: 2002 figures show populations of farmland bird species 13% below their 1990 level for a group of 11 EU Member States. The proportion of fish catches in EU managed waters that come from stocks considered to be outside safe biological limits may give a clue on marine biodiversity. This proportion has been in recent years around 40 to 60 % for demersal fish (like cod, hake and other valuable fish) and between 30 and 50% for benthic fish (such as flatfish, monkfish, crustaceans). The amount of waste generated throughout the Community has increased significantly over the last decades, but some countries have recently shown signs of decoupling waste generation and GDP growth. Soil loss continues to be of concern.

Questions:

27. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its objectives in the management of natural resources?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

28. If no, explain why. Do you think the objectives need to be updated?

Free text (max 200 words) While some progress has been made, significant challenges ahead require that objectives should be updated. There is still continuing loss of biodiversity in the EU arising from development pressures (infrastructure, urbanisation, energy production), overgrazing, pollution, overfishing, etc. The progress made on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is welcome. Efforts will now need to focus on implementation to ensure cross compliance and decoupling subsidies from production.

Marine biodiversity remains under significant pressure. Overfishing is at the heart of this; many stocks of commercial fish species are in poor condition and the status of nearly half is unknown. In addition, non-fish species are affected by a high fishing intensity.

The stronger emphasis on the close linkages between the future thematic strategies on Natural Resources and on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste and the Integrated Product Policy initiative offer a potentially important contribution to changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns as agreed in Johannesburg.

29. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?

Questions:

Free text (max 200 words): Full implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives' is required to ensure that Europe's most important wildlife sites and species are protected, with sites in good condition and healthy species population. A clear sense of priority, which has broad-based agreement among key stakeholders, can help ensure that limited resources are used to greatest effect in reducing the loss of biodiversity. It can clarify to decision-makers and the public what needs to be done, and support the pulling together and coordination of human and financial resources to address agreed priorities.

30. Is the international dimension of the management of natural resources well taken into account in EU policies? How do non-EU country policies help or hinder achieving the EU objectives?

Free text (max 200 words)

31. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address unsustainable use of natural resources and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words)

VI. MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

The problem: what we said in 2001

"Transport congestion has been rising rapidly and is approaching gridlock. This mainly affects urban areas, which are also challenged by problems such as inner city decay, sprawling suburbs, and concentrations of acute poverty and social exclusion."

Main Objectives- from EU SDS 2001

"A sustainable transport policy should tackle rising volumes of traffic and levels of congestion, noise and pollution and encourage the use of environment-friendly modes of transport as well as the full internalisation of social and environmental costs. Action is needed to bring about a significant decoupling of transport growth and GDP growth, in particular by a shift from road to rail, water and public passenger transport."

What we have done and what we are doing

The EU is encouraging a shift from road transport to modes with lower environmental impacts, such as clean buses and shipping, *inter alia* via the funding of trans-European network projects, as proposed in the Commission's transport White Paper.

The trans-European transport network aims to contribute to economic cohesion and growth in the EU. Market opening for rail freight transport aims to enhance the competitiveness of railways, and together with the Marco Polo programme, to facilitate modal shift. Significant progress has also been made in vehicle and fuel technology, driven by EU legislation and initiatives, reducing. Use of

biofuels in transport is being supported by legislation. The Commission is also proposing that Member States gradually introduce infrastructure charging at national level, to influence transport demand by moving towards a situation where prices paid by transport users reflect the full costs to society. To improve road safety, the EU has launched the eSafety initiative which aims to halve the number of deaths on European roads by 2010. Support is also provided (under the Civitas and CUTE initiatives) to pioneering cities who introduce improved urban transport including measures to encourage a better mix of transport modes and clean vehicles (including hydrogen vehicles) and spread best practice

The EU's Structural Funds include a specific programme (Urban II) for the sustainable development of cities and declining urban areas. The Commission is preparing a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment due to be published in 2005.

Progress in meeting the agreed objectives/ New evidence on the issue

Improvements in fuel and vehicle technology have resulted in a drop in emissions of many pollutants, although the impacts of some, for example the health impacts of fine particulates from diesel vehicles, remain of concern. Energy efficiency per vehicle has improved substantially, but this has been more than offset by the growth in the volume of transport, so that transport CO₂ emissions are rising, neutralising reductions achieved in other sectors. Since 1996, land-based passenger transport (road/rail) has shown a slight slowdown in growth (relative decoupling), but for freight transport there is no similar trend observed.

The extent of built-up areas in Europe continues to grow at faster rates than population growth, contributing to an unsustainable development trend of increases in traffic, infrastructure costs, use of private cars, social segregation in urban areas, soil sealing and fragmentation of natural, semi-natural and agricultural areas, posing a threat to biodiversity.

Questions:

32. Do you agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its objectives related to transport and mobility?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

Questions:

33. If no, explain why. Do you think the objectives need to be updated?

Free text (max 200 words): The European Commission's own 2004 Spring Report acknowledges that there are no signs of a significant decoupling of the environmental impacts of transport growth and GDP growth.

34. Have the right measures been identified? Have they been well implemented? Are there other actions that should be taken during the next five years?

Free text (max 200 words): Greater efforts are needed to promote cleaner vehicle technologies, notably cleaner and alternative fuels, and to decide on a new stage of European standards for motor emissions, including diesel motors, in the context of ongoing work in this regard. The Commission should work with industry to reach early agreement on significantly reducing fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions.

35. Is the international dimension of the issue well covered in EU policies? Is there an international dimension to EU policies to reduce the environmental impacts of transport? How do non-EU policies help or hinder achieving the EU objectives?

Free text (max 200 words)

36. Have the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development? What short and long term trade-offs or synergies do you see between actions to address unsustainable transport trends and actions in other domains?

Free text (max 200 words): More progress is needed to shift the tax burden from employment and labour to activities, such as in the transport sector, which give rise to environmental pollution. It would be desirable to put in place a general framework for transport infrastructure pricing.

VII. BEYOND THE PRIORITY ISSUES:

Questions:

37. Having commented on the six priority issues identified in 2001, do you agree that the scope of the strategy should be widened by including additional priority issues?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

38. If so which ones, and why?

Free text (max 200 words)

39. Alternatively, do you agree that the scope of the strategy be focused on a more limited number of issues?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

40. If so which ones, and why?

Free text (max 200 words)

CHANGING THE WAY WE MAKE POLICIES – PART B

Most unsustainable trends and priority issues are characterised by complex interactions between sectors, conflicts between long-term gain and short-term costs, and the difficulty of markets to deliver a solution. This is why the EU Sustainable Development Strategy also called for changes in the way policy is made and implemented, including the need to make trade-offs between conflicting objectives and interests explicit.

I. IMPROVING POLICY COHERENCE

The Commission's proposal for an EU SDS argued that all policies must have sustainable development as their core concern. This means policy-makers must identify potential unintended adverse effects (spillovers) both in other policy areas and in non-EU countries as policies in one area may contribute to, or hinder, achieving wider policy objectives. For example human health problems may impact the productivity of labour and economic growth.

Policy integration also helps improve policy coherence. For example, the achievement of environmental objectives increasingly requires action in other policy areas such as agriculture, enterprise, energy, transport and taxation. This is why the principle of integrating environmental considerations into other policy areas is enshrined in the Treaty establishing the European Community¹⁵. The EU has also increased its efforts to better assess impacts of trade liberalisation inter alia through trade sustainable impact assessment.

In this respect, the European Commission used a wide range of tools in the past to assess its proposals: environmental assessments, SME fiches, regulatory analyses, health impact assessments, etc. However, they tended to concentrate on a single sector and did not take account of the complexity and cross-cutting nature of policies. In 2001, the Commission therefore introduced its Impact Assessment process, which streamlines and replaces previous tools. Under this process, the main expected economic, social and environmental impacts of a proposal will be assessed.

The European Union has also acted to support policy assessment within Member States through the use of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). These procedures can be used to ensure that the environmental implications of decisions are taken into account both for individual projects such as a dam, motorway, airport or factory (EIA), and for plans, programmes and policies (SEA).

¹⁵ Article 6 of the EC Treaty requires the integration of environmental protection requirements into other policy areas.

Questions:

41. How well do you consider the various Community policies contribute to sustainable development? How could their contribution be improved?

Free text (max 200 words): The policy making processes must ensure effective balance and promote synergies between the three pillars of sustainable development, in particular through decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, and clarify the interaction between the SDS, the Lisbon Strategy and the Cardiff process, to give renewed momentum to the integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies.

42. Do you agree that the Commission's approach of using Impact Assessments to increase policy coherence has been appropriate?

Strongly agree *X agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

43. If yes, explain why. If no, explain why not.

Free text (max 200 words): The introduction of the Impact Assessment process in 2001 for the Commission's own proposals is a welcome development. Tools are needed, on one hand to evaluate actual achievements (ex-post evaluation), and on the other to evaluate and assess future development (ex-ante evaluation). The implementation of Strategic Environmental Assessment is welcome. Further work is necessary to put in place a comprehensive impact assessment and reporting system for sustainable development purposes.

44. Do you have any suggestions for improving or complementing this approach?

Free text (max 200 words): Efforts should be made to promote dissemination and sharing of information on examples of best practice in the area of SD assessment, reporting and monitoring which exist within and outside the EU, both in international and national organisations. Best practice needs to be evaluated and fully integrated into European policy-making processes.

45. Are there areas in which you think this approach is not being applied / implemented sufficiently?

Free text (max 200 words): The application of sustainability impact assessments should be extended to external as well as internal impacts of EU policy proposals, e.g., in the area of trade. Analysis of policy proposals should quantify the costs of not taking action in terms of their impacts on human health and the environment and set it out alongside the benefits of taking action.

II. GETTING PRICES RIGHT TO GIVE SIGNALS TO INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

A key issue for Sustainable Development is to harness the power of markets. Doing so means making sure that market prices reflect the true costs of economic activities to society. For this purpose, Member States use market-based instruments (e.g. environmentally related taxes, deposit refund schemes, emission trading schemes, subsidies) to varying degrees.

Progress has also been made over recent years at EU level. The 2003 Energy Tax Directive extends the Community system of minimum tax rates from mineral oils to other energy products (i.e. coal, gas, electricity), and in 2005, an EU-wide allowance trading scheme for greenhouse gas emissions will help achieve the Kyoto emission reduction targets in a cost-effective way. The reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy have encouraged farmers to orientate their cultivation choices to better reflect market signals. Environmental state aid guidelines ensure that distortions of competition created by state aid are balanced by real environmental benefits (e.g. they allow operating aid to support renewable energy).

Questions:

46. Do you agree that the EU and Member States have made satisfactory progress in making sure that prices reflect the true costs of economic activities to society?

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

47. How can market forces best be used to promote sustainable development?

Free text (max 200 words): Reform of CAP and adoption of the Energy Tax Directive are welcome. However, more needs to be done; the Commission, together with Member States, should intensify efforts to remove subsidies from environmentally harmful activities and to shift the tax burden from employment and labour to activities which give rise to environmental pollution. As provided for in the March 2004 Environment Council Conclusions, the Commission should establish, by the mid-term review of the 6th EAP, a list of criteria allowing such environmentally negative subsidies to be recorded, with a view to gradually eliminating them.

III. INVESTING IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FUTURE

Improvements in our quality of life in the long term depend on advances in knowledge, innovation and technological progress so that we are able to achieve '*more from less*'. Investments from both public and private sources are needed, alongside changes in our consumption patterns, if we are to adjust to sustainable development. This also involves investments in education, training and lifelong learning.

The 6th Framework programme for Research and Technology Development, the Union's main instrument for research in Europe, focuses on seven key areas, with one specifically devoted to "sustainable development, global change and ecosystems", and several others contributing directly to it (e.g. food quality). At the 2002 Barcelona European Council, it was agreed that overall

spending on R&D in the EU should increase and approach 3 % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2010. Currently (2002), spending is only at 1.99% of GDP for EU-15 and 1.94% of GDP for EU-25 and at the current rate of growth the research intensity in 2010 will fall short of the goal set in Barcelona. In 2003, the Commission adopted an Action Plan to reach this target working with business and Member States, most of whom are already taking measures to boost investment in research. Of particular concern is the low level of R&D spending by business, which may threaten Europe's competitiveness in the long run. In a recent Communication on future orientations for European research policy, the Commission proposed to double the EU budget for research, thus contributing to the 3% target¹⁶.

An Environmental Technologies Action Plan has been adopted to harness their full potential to reduce pressures on our natural resources, improve the quality of life of European citizens and to stimulate economic growth. Key actions include the launch of technology platforms in areas such as hydrogen and fuel cells, photovoltaics, and water supply and sanitation. It proposes that environmental performance targets for products and services be established, and that the best use is made of the funds available (such as the funds for research, development and demonstration, and for regional development) and of public and private procurement policies to promote eco-efficient investments and innovations.

Finally, a new Communication from the Commission on "Science and technology, the key to Europe's future – Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research"¹⁷ has been adopted highlighting main areas of the future Research Framework Programme, including the creation of "Technological Platforms".

Questions:

48. Are the actions identified in the EU SDS in the area of science and technology appropriate in contributing to sustainable development? Have they been adequately implemented?

Free text (max 200 words): The publication of the Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP) and inclusion of sustainable development as one of the seven key areas in the 6th Framework Programme are welcome developments. There is a need for strong links between the ETAP, LIFE and the 7th Research Framework Programme to ensure complementarity.

¹⁶ COM(2004)353

¹⁷ COM(2004)353 final of 16.06.2004

IV. IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND MOBILISING CITIZENS AND BUSINESS

More open policy-making that involves citizens and business should help identify any trade-off and synergies necessary to achieve sustainable development. In order to facilitate earlier and more systematic dialogue at the level of the Union, the Commission has come forward with minimum standards for stakeholder consultation. A single access point for Commission consultations has also been established.

The Aarhus convention provides citizens access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters. Since signing the Convention in 1998 the EU has taken important steps to update existing legal provisions in order to meet the requirements of the Aarhus Convention by means of legislation directed to the Member States, but also for its own institutions. In particular, two directives concerning access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making ("first" and "second pillar" of the Aarhus Convention) have been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council earlier in 2003. They have to be implemented in national law by 2005.

Businesses have a direct interest in sustainability. Increasingly companies are realising that adopting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices can be in their strategic interest and lead to business benefits including improved financial performance, while reducing negative and increasing positive impacts on society and the environment. The Commission has defined CSR as a voluntary business contribution to sustainable development and set up a European Multi-Stakeholder Forum as a key element of its strategy to foster CSR. The Forum, made up of European employer' organisations, business network, trade unions and NGOs presented a final report about its work and recommendations to the Commission in June 2004.

Questions:

49. How can communication and citizens and business involvement in decision making support the EU's efforts most effectively to achieve the changes in behaviour that will be needed if we are to move toward long-term sustainability?

Free text (max 200 words): Better communications begins with earlier consultation with stakeholders and, in particular, with those who are most directly affected. National Sustainable Development Councils can play a key role. They do not yet exist in every country but where they do exist they provide valuable support for the process of creating, implementing and monitoring national strategies. They work best and have most positive influence where they are established as independent bodies drawing in many stakeholder interests and able to comment publicly on emerging issues and Government policies from a sustainability perspective. At the same time, they need to be responsible bodies that build trust and can earn the respect of Government and the wider public and be given good access to influence the process of policy formation and decision-taking. The revised Sustainable Development Strategy might promote the formation of National Councils in every country of the Union and propose some informal guidelines as to their mode of formation and operation.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF CHANGING POLICY MAKING

Questions:

50. Do you think the EU policy making process is conducive to achieving sustainable development?

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

51. If yes, say why. If no, please suggest how it could be improved.

Free text (max 200 words): The planned mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 should take full account of the revised SDS and of the 6th EAP as well as the EU's environmental agenda; it should refocus on the imperative of greater environmental integration, notably in the transport and energy sectors, including through the development of overall and sectoral objectives as well as of effective monitoring mechanisms, and review and promote progress towards agreed targets.

As outlined earlier, a stronger political commitment and willingness to tackle difficult issues will be essential to meet the challenges. Enhanced stakeholder participation is also needed if the revised strategy is to address the difficulty of mobilising public support for long term goals.

The Commission, together with the Member States, should examine the extent to which the open method of co-ordination could be used to spread best practice and achieve greater convergence towards the main EU sustainable development goals.

MEASURING AND REPORTING ON OUR PROGRESS – PART C

The Strategy required the Commission to report annually to the Heads of State and Government on the progress made in the implementation of the SDS through its Spring report and through a set of headline indicators. In addition, work has been undertaken to develop more comprehensive sustainable development indicators.

In the sustainable development strategy the Commission also announced that it would establish a **sustainable development “round table”** of independent experts offering a broad range of views, who would report directly to the Commission President in time for the preparation of the Commission’s synthesis report to the Spring European Council and make recommendations to improve the coherence of Community policies, and that it would hold a two-yearly **Stakeholder forum** to assess the EU Strategy.

Questions:

52. Are you familiar with the Commission's structural indicators and sustainable development indicators? Yes/no

Yes No Don't know

53. If yes, do you agree that they provide a reliable and useful way to measure and report progress in implementing the strategy?

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

54. Do you agree that progress on sustainable development is adequately reported on?

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

55. If no, why not?

Free text (max 200 words) The Commission should take steps to ensure that Environmental Policy Reviews provide, each year in due time for full consideration by the Environment Council at its December meeting, strategic and action-oriented reports feeding into the preparation of the Spring European Council and better reflecting developments at national and international levels.

The shortlist of headline indicators agreed in December 2003 should be conveyed to public opinion through the mass media in order to monitor the progress made in achieving the goals of the Lisbon, Göteborg and Stockholm Councils. In parallel to the shortlist, a publicly accessible database containing a larger number of indicators in order to fully monitor structural reforms should be maintained. The the Spring Report should continue to base its analysis on the longer list of indicators. Further progress is desireable to enhancing the balance of headline indicators according to the priorities of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the 6th Environmental Action Plan. Indicators on biodiversity and health should be included in conjunction with the review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

4. LINKING THE EU STRATEGY TO GLOBAL AND NATIONAL STRATEGIES

At Gothenburg in 2001 the focus was on a SDS for Europe. However, the EU's strategy does not exist in isolation but needs to be coherently integrated into the broader framework made up of international, regional and national strategies and commitments.

4.1 THE GLOBAL DIMENSION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The problem: what we said in 2002

The rapid expansion in the movement of goods, services, capital, technology, ideas and people around the world – globalisation – is one of the main drivers of economic growth and improving living standards, but can also result in negative pressures on the environment and in risks for social cohesion. Problems, such as poverty, disease, access to basic resources or depletion of natural resources also occur on a global scale. Many of our actions also affect people outside the EU and may conflict with sustainable development objectives.

Main objective

Managing globalisation and effectively tackling global problems requires more international collaboration. It also requires a stronger coherence between Europe's internal and external policies and therefore should also be an important aspect of the EU's sustainable development strategy.

What we are doing

For this purpose an external dimension was added to the EU SDS in 2002. In a Communication to the Barcelona European Council, the Commission proposed to extend the promotion of sustainability through EU "external" policies and instruments. The strategy sets out a number of comprehensive and integrated actions, including actions related to the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the WTO – the Doha Development Agenda – the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and major international meetings such as Conferences of the Parties of Multilateral Environmental Agreements and at the International Labour Conference. In these fora, the EU has promoted a multilateral approach to global problems, including through improved global governance. In the WSSD, the EU's approach was instrumental in achieving the adoption of ambitious and quantified targets in a number of areas. It actively supported the work of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation, established by the International Labour Organisation and it has indicated its readiness to contribute to the follow-up of the World Commission's recommendations and proposals.

A key outcome of Johannesburg was the increased involvement and commitment of both civil society and business. More than 250 partnerships were signed with governments, providing effective new flexible mechanisms to support WSSD implementation. The EU launched three major partnership initiatives, on energy, integrated water resources management, water supply and sanitation and illegal logging. These contribute to poverty eradication, the Millennium Development Goals and Multilateral Environmental Agreements, particularly those on Biodiversity,

Climate Change and Desertification. Furthermore, in the WSSD the “Coalition on Renewable Energy”, which brings together 87 countries and regions committed to increasing their use of renewable energies through quantified time-bound targets, was initiated.

Since then, the EU has made progress in terms of developing the three partnership initiatives approved in Johannesburg. In addition to this a number of concrete steps have been taken to meet the Monterrey commitments, particularly on overseas development aid and on EU's participation in the Debt Sustainability commitment. The EU's development policy also addresses the need for good governance and peace as a prerequisite for sustainable development, *inter alia* through the EU-Africa dialogue and the 250 million euros African Peace Facility.

The 2003 Spring Council updated the strategy so that it could better encompass international commitments, and agreed on priorities for promoting sustainable development on a global scale.

Questions:

56. Has the EU strategy for sustainable development effectively contributed to global sustainable development

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

57. Are EU's international commitments translated sufficiently into internal EU policies?

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree uncertain

58. Do you have any suggestions as to how this could be improved?

Free text (max 200 words): The implementation of WSSD commitments should continue to have a high priority and be integrated into all relevant internal and external policies of the EU. There is a need to ensure that the SDS addresses adequately the global footprint of the EU on the rest of the world and that international commitments are fully taken into account. Including development aid organisations into a wider stakeholder SD fora would help to place the global dimension more firmly on the EU SD agenda.

59. What are the top international priorities that should be dealt with in the EU strategy, and how should we deal with them?

Free text (max 200 words): Efforts should be intensified to incorporate the external dimension of sustainable development to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and implement the commitments made in Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg, through better coherence between internal and external EU policies and measures. The EU should continue to make an effective contribution to the practical, action-oriented, multi-year work programme of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in the period 2004-17. The EU should continue to support a strengthened role for UNEP.

60. Do EU internal policies help or hinder the achievement of global sustainable development? Which policies help? Which policies do not?

Free text (max 200 words)

4.2 THE NATIONAL DIMENSION

In 2001 only a few Member States had national sustainable strategies but nowadays the majority do, including many of the new Member States. National strategies¹⁹ are both complex and diverse and there are clearly elements of overlap and interdependence between national strategies and the EU strategy. This is partly because some objectives may be established at EU level but implemented at national or local level (e.g. air quality norms; the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and partly because some instruments operate at EU level (e.g. internal market or state aid rules).

Some difference in approach and priorities is natural as circumstances differ from one country to another. But the question remains whether there are any core *issues*, *themes*, or *ideas* that should be common to all (e.g. sustainable production and consumption, ageing and demography, or the “external dimension” of sustainable development)?

Further convergence between the strategies adopted at the different levels of government (local, regional, national and European) still need to be fostered.

¹⁹ European Commission staff working document, ‘National Sustainable Development Strategies in the European Union’ (url)

Questions:

61. Do you think that the recent enlargement of the European Union has created new challenges for sustainable development that need to be taken into account?

X *Strongly agree* *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

62. If yes, which ones?

Free text (max 200 words) The recent accession of 10 new member states raises new challenges and brings new aspirations to bear. The significance of the diversity of an EU 25 – in terms of culture, economy, society, heritage, biodiversity and landscape - as opposed to the 15 should not be underestimated. The cohesion gap and welfare differentials are a huge challenge, e.g., transport sector, with a likely scenario emerging of a trend towards mobility levels in accession countries on par with that currently enjoyed in other EU states, with all the consequences in terms of environmental degradation that such a scenario implies.

63. Is there a need to ensure stronger co-ordination between sustainable development strategies at different levels (e.g. local, regional, national, EU, international)?

X *Strongly agree* *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*

64. If so, do you have any suggestions as to how this could be achieved?

Free text (max 200 words): As recommended by the European Environment Advisory Council's *Kinsale Challenge*, there is considerable scope for an EU initiative to enhance the effectiveness of national strategies; such an initiative might form an important element to emerge from the review of the SDS. It might:

- encourage the creation of national strategies in every country in the Union so as to achieve comprehensive coverage,
- define a common vision of sustainability in Europe and propose some shared goals and targets,
- promote best practice in the way in which strategies can be created, and engage a wide range of actors and stakeholders in making their own commitments, and
- reinforce monitoring of progress.

5. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Having gone through some of the more specific questions related to the European Sustainable Development Strategy, you now may wish to give your thoughts regarding the overall progress made by the EU since 2001.

Questions:

65. Overall, would you say that the EU's progress towards sustainable development since 2001 has been satisfactory?

Strongly agree *agree* *disagree* *strongly disagree* *uncertain*