



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

BACKGROUND PAPER¹

1. Introduction

The UK Presidency Sustainable Development Networking Event comes at a time when all but two EU Member States have adopted new or revised strategies and are now facing the difficult task of taking forward implementation. Improving the delivery of these strategies – moving from words to action – is the major challenge. Engaging not only national environmental and SD authorities, but also other government departments, local and regional authorities, and other stakeholders will be key.

Securing the attention of politicians and the public is of course a priority. But how can we communicate a complex and at the same time abstract concept such as sustainability? What kinds of arguments are needed to make a convincing case for sustainable development? How can we point to progress towards what is as yet an undefined end-point? Importantly, how can we best promote learning from past results and experiences, in order to support better delivery in the future?

Parallel to these national preoccupations are EU level discussions on the revision of the EU's own SD strategy. Here there is an opportunity to 'relaunch' a process by identifying more ambitious, clearer and more integrated objectives, targets and milestones, supported by improved monitoring and reporting. Critical issues are how to ensure EU and national strategies are complementary, and how lessons from the national level can inform and underpin EU practice, and vice versa.

Building on previous discussions and reflecting ongoing developments, the 2005 event will focus on the following three themes:

- Improving the delivery of national SD strategies;
- Engaging the public and evaluating results; and
- Reviewing the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

The event has been organised by Defra - the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - with support from a project steering committee including representatives from several national SD and

¹ This background paper has been prepared by the Institute for European Environmental Policy and does not necessarily represent the views of DEFRA.

environment departments, the European Commission (DG Env) and the European Environmental Advisory Council (EEAC) sustainable development working group. The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) has provided help in developing the programme.

2. Building on previous SD networking events

The Windsor event is the latest in what is becoming a regular annual meeting of policy makers, coordinators and advisers on sustainable development at the national and EU levels. Previous SD networking events were held in the Hague (2002), Vienna (2003) and Kinsale (2004), with the support also from a number of additional countries.

The 2005 event aims to build on the discussions and conclusions of earlier meetings, so that understanding and learning in support of sustainable development can be advanced. To this end, it is helpful to reflect on the content and conclusions of earlier meetings, and to highlight a number of emerging trends.

- The network is growing. The first event at the Hague brought together a small group of 28 experts, mainly project leaders of NSSD processes from the Member States and accession countries, plus non-governmental organisations (NGOs). By 2004, numbers had risen to nearly 110, extending beyond the Member States to include also the European Commission, EEA and the European Environmental Advisory/SD Councils.
- A wider range of SD-related issues is being addressed, by a more diverse range of participants. The make-up of the network has evolved, to better reflect SD. That said, even at Kinsale the number of environment ministries, agencies and councils outweighed SD and other organisations. There were too few representatives from social and economic interests, and none explicitly representing the external or global aspects of SD in the EU.
- The exchange of good practice is being stepped up. At Vienna, learning was supported by an 'Innovation market place' that provided an opportunity to present innovative SD strategy processes. Posters were also prepared for the Kinsale event. However, despite the learning potential provided by the meetings themselves, there has been limited opportunity to exchange information between meetings. Access to earlier event papers and conclusions is not always possible in all cases.
- Links between national and EU SD strategies have become an important focus of attention. The Hague meeting was focused on national SD strategies alone, although attention was given to the vertical linkage and coherence upwards with international and downwards with local/ regional activities. The Vienna event broadened discussions to include also the interface between national strategies

and the EU level strategy. This was a key purpose of the event, intended to support the creation of positive synergies, ensure coherence and promote learning between the EU and national levels.

The 2005 Windsor event will take these themes as the starting point for discussions.

3. The Windsor Event

The 2005 SD Networking event will run from 10am Thursday 14 July until after lunch at 2pm on Friday 15 July, followed by an optional afternoon excursion. The event will be held at the Beaumont House Conference Centre (<http://www.hayley-conf.co.uk/pages/beaumont.html>) near Windsor.

The event will be organised around a combination of plenary and 'breakout' sessions, following the three main workshop themes:

- Improving delivery of national SD strategies;
- Public engagement and evaluation; and
- Reviewing the EU SDS.

Learning from practice

One of the main threads running throughout the network event series, and this event is no exception, is learning from one another's experience. Thus,

- discussions during the Windsor event will be informed by a series of three papers. These will highlight examples of **good (or interesting) practice**, corresponding to the three main workshop themes. The case studies have been selected on the basis of suggestions made by network participants as well as by additional experts and relevant studies.
- The introductory session including **keynote presentations** and discussions is designed so as to frame the workshop sessions. UK Environment Minister Elliot Morley MP will welcome delegates and introduce the conference. Other keynote presentations will focus on each of the three workshop themes. The aim is to set the scene and inspire participants to approach the issues in new and innovative ways.
- From the list of case studies included in the background papers, different cases will be briefly **presented at each workshop session**. The aim will be to discuss the cases; to highlight comparable or contrasting experiences in other Member States; and to identify approaches that might usefully be applied elsewhere. The intention is to ensure that discussions in the workshops are grounded in reality, and that the focus is on lessons learned rather than simply identifying interesting practices.

- **Posters** offered by member States will present examples of good practice. These will be put on display during the event in the refreshments lounge.

The conference conclusions, posters and background papers will also be made available for future reference to network members and others not attending the event.

3. Workshop sessions

The main discussions during the event will take place in working groups organised around the three main themes. The workshops are organised in such a way as to ensure that all delegates participate in discussions under each of the three themes, each time building on the discussions of the previous group.

A team of facilitators, assisted by rapporteurs drawn from the participants, will follow the three themes throughout the event (see below). Facilitators will steer the discussion, and ‘cross-pollinate’ by reporting to the next group the key messages from the previous group. Rapporteurs will along the way accumulate discussions, ideas and recommendations, and will distil key messages for presentation to the plenary at the end of the discussions.

Overall, this approach is intended to ensure maximum fertilisation between the different discussions, and the minimum set of reports back to the final plenary session.

	Workshop 1: Improving Delivery	Workshop 2: Engagement and Evaluation	Workshop 3: Review of the EU SDS
	Facilitators	Facilitators	Facilitators
Thursday 14-15.30	Group 1 Olivia Bina Group 2 David Baldock	Group 3 David Wilkinson Group 4 Barry Dalal-Clayton	Group 5 Clare Coffey Group 6 Andreas Kraemer
Thursday 16-17.30	Group 3 Olivia Bina Group 4 David Baldock	Group 5 David Wilkinson Group 6 Barry Dalal-Clayton	Group 1 Clare Coffey Group 2 Andreas Kraemer
Friday 9-10.30	Group 5 Olivia Bina Group 6 David Baldock	Group 1 David Wilkinson Group 2 Barry Dalal-Clayton	Group 3 Clare Coffey Group 4 Andreas Kraemer

Plenary introduction: Prof Paul Ekins, Policy Studies Institute (UK), and Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution/EEAC)

Workshop facilitators: Olivia Bina (New University, Lisbon) & David Baldock (IEEP)

The aim of this workshop is to identify concrete examples from EU and Member State experience, on how to integrate sustainable development into practical policy-making across government departments and levels of government.

Specific topics for discussion in the workshop are:

- The transition from strategy development to strategy implementation - what kinds of instruments are used and what are the different approaches to project creation. How can existing and new tools for sustainable development be developed and strengthened, for example sustainability impact assessments?
- Finance and budgets: what role can national budgetary procedures and expenditure programmes play in terms of advancing SD strategy implementation?
- Strengthening vertical coordination between national governments and their regional and local authorities, and other sub-national stakeholders.
- Institutional support for sustainability – what role do, and should, SD Commissions/ Advisory Councils play? What kind of inter-ministerial bodies are effective? What about arrangements to support cooperation between, on the one hand, administrations, Governments and parliament, and on the other hand, between levels of governance?

Plenary introduction: Tony Long, Director WWF European Policy Office, Brussels
Workshop facilitators: David Wilkinson (IEEP)& Barry Dalal-Clayton (IIED)

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

Specific topics for discussion are:

- Involving stakeholders in the development of national sustainable development strategies and subsequent implementation and evaluation processes. How can we ensure that the 'right' stakeholders are involved?
- How do Member State administrations communicate unsustainable trends, for example, to political actors? What are current and new trends in communicating sustainable development. What role can and do indicators play in communication?
- Recent and ongoing work to evaluate national SD strategies. What are the best methods and procedures for reviewing and extracting lessons learnt from national strategies? What role is there for a EU-wide methodology for review and peer review so that evaluations are comparable and relevant? What lessons can we learn from the review and peer review undertaken in relation to the French SDS? What role is there in evaluations for parliamentary scrutiny?
- Consultation and impact assessment – how stakeholder engagement can be improved to strengthen balanced impact assessments

Plenary introduction: Christine Dalby, European Commission (Sec-Gen)

Workshop facilitators: Clare Coffey (IEEP) & R Andreas Kraemer (Ecologic)

The workshop provides an opportunity to discuss and feed into the European Commission's forthcoming proposal for a revised EU SDS. The Commission has set out its broad lines for the review, which will be reflected during the workshop.

Specific topics for discussion include

1. Clarifying the basic principles of the EU SDS – What should the EU SDS contain to ensure greater coherence between it and the Lisbon Strategy? How should reporting on the two processes be arranged to support such coherence? How can the EU SDS fully reflect the external dimension of EU development?
2. New approaches to policy-making and coherence - What type of coordination between the Member States and the Commission would be suitable to support implementation of the EU SD strategy?
3. Key trends and linkages between them - What are the trends and linkages between solutions that should be reflected in the revised SDS, bearing in mind the need for the EU SDS to add value?
4. Objectives, targets and milestones - What are the headline objectives that need to be included in the revised EU SDS? How should milestones be expressed? Should operational objectives and targets be developed on a thematic basis, for example sustainable production and consumption, or on a sectoral basis?
5. Effective monitoring - What reporting arrangements would be acceptable, given the desire to minimise the reporting burden? Where should institutional responsibility for driving forward and monitoring the EU SDS lie? Could national experience with independent SD advisory bodies be translated to the EU level?
6. Ownership and cooperation with actors - How might stakeholder partnerships be developed, monitored and evaluated? What role could the EU SD network play in supporting co-ordination and mutual learning?

Breakout outcomes

The rapporteurs, in consultation with the workshop facilitators, will provide composite reports on the discussions in the workshops. The feedback will focus on concrete proposals for strengthening co-operation on SD between the Member States, and between the Member States and Commission.

The reports back will also be reflected in the summary report of the Windsor event.

Closing plenary session – looking to the future

The closing plenary session will seek to draw broad conclusions from the discussion, on the basis of the reports back from the workshops. As far as possible, this session will also be used to agree key next steps in strengthening the network. Possible issues for discussion during the final session include:

- *Extending the multi-dimensional nature of the network* - both as regards the subject matter being discussed as well as the network's membership. The latter could be extended better to reflect the social, economic, and international or global aspects of national and EU strategies. Enhancing linkages with regional actors or networks may also be desirable.
- *Formalising the network events*. At the Vienna workshop consideration was given to the idea of making the SD networking events more secure. There was concern in particular that the annual events were left to the discretion of the Presidencies. In order to insure against an unsympathetic Presidency, it was suggested that a rotation mechanism should be explored to secure annual events, but falling short of a more formal network concept.
- *Creating an SD 'good practice facility'* - an 'event' website was suggested at the Vienna event, keeping the network alive between meetings in order to support the exchange of information, documents and links. A basic level of information, such as provision of access to past documentation, would appear to be possible at little additional cost. A more substantial system for good practice exchange and learning, possibly requiring the establishment of a permanent office, would require more preparation and resourcing, and the financial commitment of Member States and/ or the Commission.