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Workshop Report

4th ESDN Workshop

“New Drive for Sustainable Development Strategies – The Power of Smart Linkages”

Approaches for integrated governance at national level and their
innovative potentials for the EU SDS

Hosted by the [ESDN](#) in cooperation with the [Swedish EU Presidency](#)

Brussels, 3-4 November 2009

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Introduction

The 4th ESDN workshop on “New Drive for Sustainable Development Strategies – The Power of Smart Linkages” took place in Brussels on 3-4 November 2009 and was hosted by the ESDN in cooperation with the Swedish EU Presidency. In total, 46 participants from 17 European countries attended the workshop, including ESDN members, representatives of the Swedish EU Presidency, representatives of the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors and Eurostat as well as members of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) and other invited experts. The list of participants can be found in Annex I of this report.

Thematic outline

The integration of various sectoral policies (horizontal policy integration) lies at the heart of the sustainable development concept. In practice, however, the challenges of integrating and coordinating different sectoral policies are vivid and seem to increase in the context of complex decision structures and established political-administrative cultures. Most government ministries and their related administrations are organised along sectoral policies and cross-sectoral coordination is often difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, horizontal policy integration needs to be comprehensively addressed and mechanisms need to be established if we want to achieve sustainable development on the European and Member States level. In a survey done in preparation of the ESDN Conference 2009, a vast majority of national sustainable development coordinators argued that horizontal policy integration should be more strongly addressed in the future. Moreover, the ESDN Advisory Paper on the further development of the EU SDS argued that “horizontal policy integration is considered as the most crucial challenge to be addressed in the context of the EU SDS”. Therefore, this workshop focused on (i) practical experiences with specific mechanisms aiming at horizontal policy integration in the EU Member States, (ii) how sustainable development is related to other processes, policies and strategies, (iii) existing challenges and shortcomings and how to address them, and (iv) which lessons can be learned to foster horizontal policy integration at the EU and Member States level.

Topics

The workshop consisted of three parts: The first part dealt with inter-ministerial mechanisms at the political level in order to investigate how these institutional mechanisms foster horizontal policy integration by establishing a better coordination for sustainable development between different government ministries. The second part looked into mechanisms that link legislative and executive arenas. By providing an overview of parliamentary committees in selected EU Member States, it was discussed how legislative mechanisms can support the implementation of sustainable development strategies and policies. The third part of the workshop focused on auditing and evaluation schemes that focus on how well sustainable development strategies and policies are implemented on the ground. At the end of the workshop, the participants discussed the implications of the above mechanisms and processes for the governance mechanisms of the EU SDS.

Purpose of the workshop

The workshop had three main objectives: (a) To discuss innovative governance mechanisms in relation to horizontal policy integration at the national level; (b) to reflect upon the exchange between the European and the national policy level on how to improve horizontal policy integration; and (c) to

provide advise for the European Commission on good practices and experiences in the EU Member States with specific governance mechanisms for horizontal policy integration.

Workshop format

The main topics of the workshop were introduced by keynote presentations of good practice cases in selected EU Member States. This was followed for each topic by a panel discussion with representatives of EU Member States (or other European countries) that have similar mechanisms in place, and representatives of the European Commission and other European institutions to reflect upon implications for the governance of the EU SDS. Moreover, each topic was discussed among the workshop participants and in exchange with the panellists. At the end of the workshop, the workshop participants discussed innovation potentials to improve the governance of the EU SDS as well as the exchange between the EU and Member States to foster horizontal policy integration.

Workshop results

The discussions during the workshop are summarised by the ESDN Office in this Workshop Report that will be distributed within the ESDN. The results of the workshop could also be used and discussed in the SDS Coordinators Group or in the current and forthcoming processes to further develop the EU SDS.

Welcome addresses

Kirsten Mortensen (Prime Minister's Office, Sweden) welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of the Swedish EU Presidency. She provided an overview of the process of the second EU SDS progress review that the Swedish EU Presidency is preparing for the European Council meeting in December 2009. To organise the progress review, a Friends of the Presidency (FoP) group was established in which all EU Member States are represented. The progress review is based on the European Commission's progress report on the EU SDS (published in July 2009), the advisory paper on the further development of the EU SDS by the ESDN and inputs from various other institutions. The FoP report will comprise two main parts: (a) possible future orientations of the EU SDS and governance issues, and (b) policy conclusions on the 7 key challenges and two cross-cutting themes of the EU SDS. The last meeting of the FoP, in which the progress review report will be decided, will take place on 26 November 2009. Ms Mortensen pointed out that the discussions at this ESDN workshop will contribute important insights to governance issues that may be taken up in the progress review. Moreover, she mentioned that the EU SDS will be for the first time discussed at the General Affairs Council on 16 November 2009.

The ESDN co-chairs, **Elisabeth Freytag and Wolfram Tertschnig** (both Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria) welcomed the workshop participants on behalf of the ESDN Steering Group. They thanked the Permanent Representation of Baden-Wuerttemberg to the EU for their hospitality and the Swedish EU Presidency for co-hosting this ESDN workshop. They pointed out that the ESDN is a network approach to governance that fosters the exchange of information and experiences amongst its members. As there is no one-size fits all approach to sustainable development and its related governance processes, the ESDN aims to broaden knowledge and to stimulate learning processes. In this context, horizontal policy integration is one of the major challenges for sustainable development governance and a discussion about approaches and experiences is timely, particularly in the context of the second EU SDS progress review.

Topic 1: Inter-ministerial mechanisms at the political level

In this session, the workshop provided an overview of inter-ministerial mechanisms at the political level to show how these institutional mechanisms can foster horizontal policy integration by providing a forum for better coordination between different government ministries. The session was chaired by **Anne-Cerise Nilsson** (Ministry of the Environment, Sweden). At the beginning, a keynote presentation on the German State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development was held which was followed by a panel and plenary discussion.

Keynote presentation: State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development in Germany¹

Stefan Bauernfeind (German Federal Chancellery) first gave a brief overview of important sustainable development documents published in Germany, i.e. the German NSDS (2002), two NSDS progress reports (2004 and 2008) and an sustainable development indicators report (2006) – documents which can be downloaded from the [German country profile](#) on the ESDN homepage. The 'management of sustainable development' was introduced with the NSDS Progress Report of 2008 in which the role of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development was strengthened. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the 'management of sustainable development' in Germany and the role of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development.

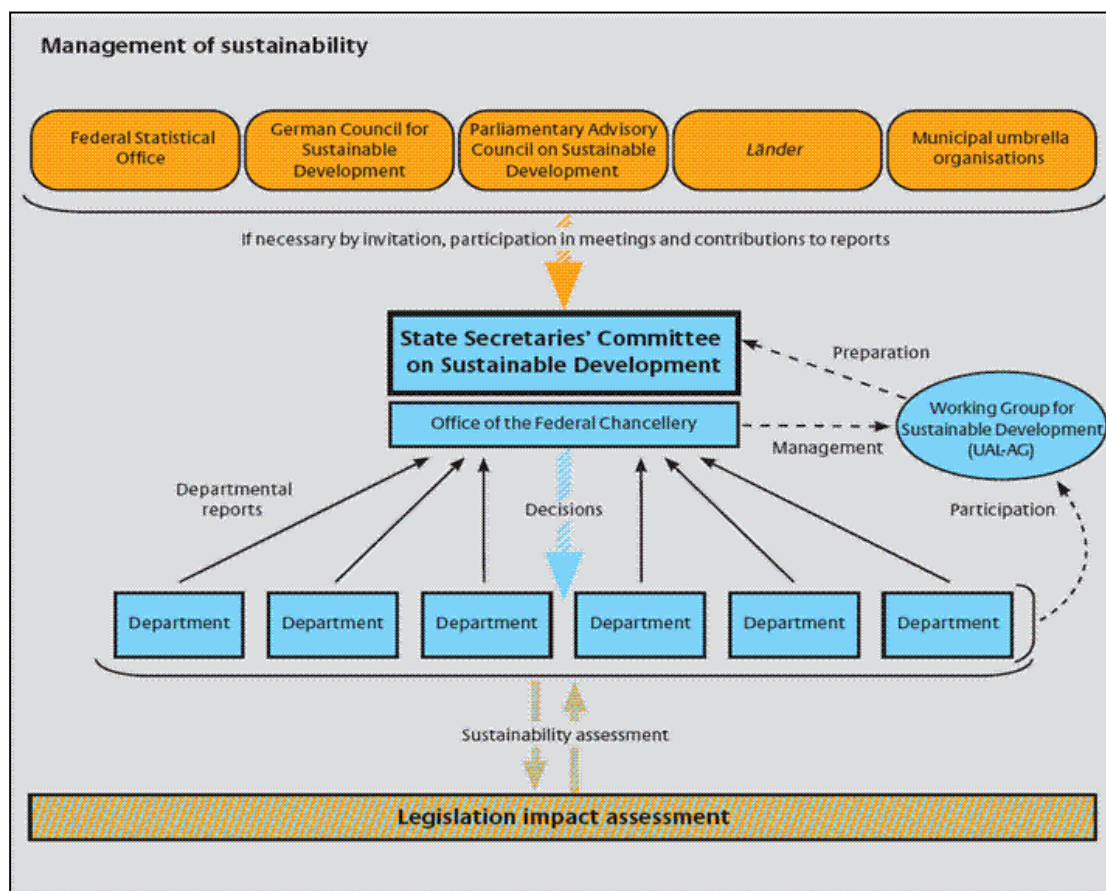


Figure 1: 'Management of sustainable development' in Germany

The members of the State Secretaries' Committee represent the second highest level of German politics and the highest level of civil servants. The state secretaries in Germany can be compared to deputy ministers in other countries. Meetings of the Committee take place on a monthly basis. The main objective of the Committee is to strengthen the coordination between different government ministries in order to achieve sustainable development. Mr Bauernfein pointed out that the recently elected new German government in its coalition agreement mentioned the importance of sustainable

¹ The slides of this, as well as of all other keynote presentations, can be downloaded from the [workshop section](#) on the ESDN homepage.

development in general and confirmed the German NSDS as guiding document as well as its related institutions and processes.

Mr Bauernfein then presented 10 issues which have proved to be important for an inter-ministerial body like the German State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development:

1. Providing and demonstrating high-level political commitment: the Committee is chaired by the Head of the Chancellery and the German Chancellery acts as the 'secretariat' of the Committee.
2. Having a standing high-level structure that involves all ministries: this guarantees power to decide in situations of conflict and sustainable development is considered as an issue that cuts across sectoral policies and competencies.
3. Regular meetings: since 2008, the Committee meets on a monthly basis which is important to make sustainable development part of the day-to-day work of ministries and to create ownership of the topic (e.g. preparation for meetings, learning effects).
4. Creating a standing inter-departmental structure of high-level group: all government ministries are represented in Committee that develops and discusses the NSDS.
5. Defining a work programme in advance: the current work programme for the Committee dates from October 2008 and outlines governance as well as sectoral policy issues.
6. Ensuring that the most important government representatives are on board: no substitution or delegation is allowed in the Committee (participation for state secretaries is obligatory, they can only be substituted by other state secretaries), organisation of the meetings is important (e.g. back-to-back with other meetings).
7. Securing added-value: the Committee serves as strategic forum that also allows discussions with external experts.
8. Preparation of meetings: report for each meeting with draft conclusions that are result-oriented and draft press release.
9. Encouraging broad ownership: defining the scope of the meeting and having reports from different ministries (they can decide which topic they want to focus on).
10. Ensuring that the NSDS is backed up by working structure: 'inserting life' within a strategy process that also fosters implementation.

More information on the State Secretaries' Committee and other sustainable development issues can be found at www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de. Mr Bauernfeind also informed the workshop participants that a peer review of the German NSDS has been undertaken which concluded that leadership should be further strengthened and that the State Secretaries' Committee is the central institution for the NSDS process.

Panel discussion

The keynote presentation was followed by a panel discussion with the following panellists: **Stefan Bauernfeind** (German Federal Chancellery), **Knut Thonstad** (Ministry of Finance, Norway) and **Marcel Haag** (Secretariat-General European Commission).

At the beginning of the panel discussion, Knut Thonstad (Ministry of Finance, Norway) gave an overview of the *Inter-ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development & Climate in Norway*. The Committee, which was established in 2002, was originally responsible for drafting the Norwegian NSDS and has since become a permanent institution. The difference to the German State Secretaries'

Committee is that the Norwegian Committee is not coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office but by the Ministry of Finance that is responsible for the state budget and climate change measures. In Norway, the state budget is considered as important tool for the work on and the achievement of sustainable development objectives. State secretaries from nearly all government ministries participate in the Committee meetings which take place twice a year. The Committee has contributed to governance mechanisms (e.g. NSDS peer review by Sweden, sustainable development indicator set, meetings with stakeholders, etc.), it is informed about budget proposals (i.e. it gets report on statistics and report from all ministries) and takes part in the budget negotiation process. In Norway, sustainable development is included in the budget outlook and there is a chapter on sustainable development in the national budget. Moreover, a white paper on sustainable development is published on an annual basis. Mr Thonstad pointed out that although institutional mechanisms may be in place, political will for sustainable development is decisive. In Norway, a close coordination among government ministries takes place on all different policy issues on a day-to-day basis. However, sustainable development still needs to get on the agenda of high-level political meetings.

Marcel Haag (Secretariat-General, European Commission) talked about **horizontal policy integration on the EU level**. He argued that the EU's constitutional set-up is the framework for the work of and cooperation among the EU institutions. Generally, horizontal policy integration is an important issues and the Secretariat-General has a special role in ensuring policy coordination and integration within the European Commission. This also includes the sustainable development agenda and follow-up activities for the EU SDS. Although the Secretariat-General and the whole European Commission cannot be compared to the political-administrative systems of individual Member States, sustainable development has been an important push-factor for policy integration in the European Commission. As a result, policy integration has become a major issue far beyond the sustainable development discourse. One major tool to foster horizontal policy integration on the EU level is the [impact assessment system](#) which has been introduced some years ago. The impact assessments (IAs) provide a systematic evaluation of major Commission policy and legislative initiatives regarding policy integration. Therefore, Mr Haag pointed out that the IAs are a powerful tool to ensure policy integration for sustainable development and beyond. The Secretariat-General has participated in all IAs and has witnessed considerable progress towards policy integration over the last few years (e.g. climate policy package, energy policy, transport policy, etc). A revision of the IA guidelines is foreseen and will include conclusions from the practical experiences in the past and will further strengthen the IA process.

Regarding the **coordination between the national sub-national level**, Stefan Bauernfeind argued that in Germany, the NSDS is only binding for the national government. However, many objectives of the NSDS also affect the sub-national levels. Therefore, the first ministers of the German regions (*Länder*) were invited to include a chapter in the NSDS progress report of 2008; in this chapter, the regions ask for a stronger coordination on sustainable development among all political levels. Following this, a decision was made to work on a joint report by the national and regional level in three areas (green public procurement, land-use and translation of national indicators to the regional level).

Knut Thonstad was asked to provide some reflection on the **peer review of the Norwegian NSDS**. He pointed out that the peer review process was challenging because Norway could not base the process on previous experiences by other countries. The Norwegian government decided to have Sweden as the only peer country because Sweden has knowledge about Norway's administrative and political practice. In total, 5 Swedish experts (and one from Uganda) undertook the peer review. The resulting report was an expert report and not an official Swedish government report. The peer review and its outcomes provided input for the NSDS revision and further work on sustainable development in the

country. Regarding the *peer review in the EU*, Marcel Haag argued that the Commission has been financially supporting NSDS peer reviews in Member States. It would now be useful to draw conclusions from experiences and reflect upon how the process could be made more effective and less resource intensive.

Plenary discussion

Several participants pointed out that horizontal policy integration is a major challenge of sustainable development. In order to achieve horizontal policy integration, ***strong leadership at the centre of government*** would be an important precondition. The examples of inter-ministerial bodies at the political level in Germany and Norway were considered as important examples of how to foster governmental steering for horizontal policy integration. Moreover, the ***inclusion of societal stakeholders*** in sustainable development policy-making could bring different experiences and expertise to meet the challenges of horizontal policy integration.

Some participants referred to the Norwegian case of including sustainable development into the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance and making ***sustainable development part of the national budget***. The Norwegian colleague pointed out that the Ministry of Finance became involved in the sustainable development policy discourse through discussions on climate change. Due to the current focus on climate change and its environmental and economic consequences, finance departments and economic actors are likely to become more involved in this debate and sustainable development in general.

Evaluation mechanisms in the context of sustainable development were also discussed. On the one hand, the participants discussed the impact assessment (IA) system applied in the European Commission. It was pointed out that the IA aims to provide a full picture of Commission proposals on sustainable development, taking into account all three pillars of sustainable development. As it explicitly focuses on cross-sectoral aspects, it must thus be distinguished from environmental policy integration. Other participants mentioned that IA must also be understood as educational measure and learning process for all departments and sectors involved. On the other hand, some participants mentioned the peer review of national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs). Although support from the European Commission was offered, only a few countries have applied peer reviews over the last years. As experiences have shown, a full peer review proved to be resource intensive and organisationally demanding. Therefore, some participants suggested developing a less intensive peer review process, e.g. visiting programmes of Commission and/or Member States representatives as the basis for the peer review. Visits could then result in recommendations and would also increase awareness of NSDSs in the respective country.

Finally, the panellists were asked to provide some ***advice on horizontal policy integration for the EU SDS***: Stefan Bauernfeind (German Federal Chancellery) said that high-level support for sustainable development from the European Commission and the Member States is important. Moreover, he considers clear structures and procedures as necessary to establish a good connection between sustainable development and the whole policy cycle. Knut Thonstad (Ministry of Finance, Norway) argued that a strong ministry (e.g. Ministry of Finance or Prime Minister's Office) should be responsible for sustainable development and that political will is a crucial factor for achieving results in practice. Marcel Haag (Secretariat-General, European Commission) mentioned that priority objectives for sustainable development are necessary to focus efforts in the policy process. Moreover, he stated that

vertical policy integration is equally important (mainly because sub-national levels deliver sustainable development policies) but that it is still a major challenge to coordinate different tiers of government.

Topic 2: Mechanisms that link legislative and executive arenas

Session 2 of the workshop looked into mechanisms that link legislative and executive arenas and thus provided an overview of parliamentary committees in selected Member States. The focus was put on how legislative mechanisms can support the implementation of sustainable development strategies and policies. This session was chaired by **Elisabeth Freytag** (ESDN co-chair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria). It was started off with a keynote presentation on the Environmental Audit Committee in the UK Parliament and followed by a panel and plenary discussion.

Keynote presentation: Environmental Audit Committee in the UK Parliament

Gordon Clarke (Clerk of the Environmental Audit Committee) started by giving an overview of the committee system in the UK Parliament. The Parliament (House of Commons) has a select committee system which covers various sectoral and cross-sectoral agendas. The Parliament sets the mandate for the committees but they also have latitude to pick specific issues they want to cover. Each committee has specific work procedures and the committees' recommendations (in the form of reports) have to be answered by the government. He pointed out that asking the right questions to government is an important activity and can make a change in policy-making. Mr Clarke also pointed out that the organisation of government departments (ministries) along sectoral policy issues does generally not foster cross-sectoral thinking and also does not go well with the cross-sectoral nature of the Environmental Audit Committee.

The Committee has 16 members and is chaired by a representative of an opposition party (Conservative Party). The Committee was first established in 1997 and since then has issued several reports on various topics, e.g. greening government, tax and spending, climate change, biofuels, housing, biodiversity, etc. Mr Clarke remarked that a major challenge for the Committee is to have access to detailed information to carry out significant audits. He then went on to give examples of areas in which the Committee could achieve an impact, e.g. greening the government agenda, profile of environmental issues within the budget process, specific policy changes (e.g. biofuels, biodiversity), contributions to debates in the Parliament and media, etc. Generally, the Committee's impact is long-term and as an intermediary institution between policy-makers, researchers and other experts. The Committee is very successful in opening debates, but often lacks important information on what government is doing on sustainable development issues. Mr Clark went on to reflect on the issue of mainstreaming sustainable development. He pointed out that although the Committee's focus is on cross-cutting policies and issues involving different ministries, environmental issues can dominate and there are more EU or national policy targets than overarching sustainable development targets.

Next, Mr Clarke presented some reflections on how the Committee's work is related to other processes, policies and strategies. He pointed out that cross-sectoral work is generally fostered in the UK government by establishing cross-sectoral units and deploying integration policy appraisals.

However, he argued that leaving competencies for sustainable development with the environmental ministry has some potential dangers as the topic may end up being approached from an environmental perspective. Putting the responsibility in the Prime Minister's office may be an important signal to foster horizontal policy integration. As future challenges, he identified, e.g. changing cultures and structure of governments (capacity, political will, cross-departmental understanding), integrating sustainable development in policy & operations, engaging lower levels of government to deliver policies, basing economic model not only on GDP but include environmental and social issues, and developing the right measurement instruments.

Finally, Mr Clarke focussed on implications for the governance of the EU SDS. He mentioned the following issues: strategic approach to mainstream sustainable development, crucial role of policy appraisal and review, development and integration of sustainable development accounting, setting realistic goals and raising bar to make improvements, balancing the carrot/stick approach and finding a role for a critical friends (similar to the Sustainable Development Commission for the UK Government).

Panel discussion

The panel discussion comprised the following panellists: **Gordon Clark** (Environmental Audit Committee, UK), **Dominik Wehling** (German Parliamentary Commission for Sustainable Development) and **Derek Osborn** (SD Observatory, European Economic and Social Committee).

Dominik Wehling presented the structure and work of the German Parliamentary Commission for Sustainable Development. He pointed out that the committee is not a standing committee; this implies that every legislative period, the committee's mandate has to be renewed. With the new German government coalition, a new attempt will be made to create a standing mandate for the Committee which would be important for its work. Moreover, the Committee is not automatically integrated in the formal legislative process of the German Parliament which implies that its advice is not binding. Therefore, the main challenge for the German Committee is its lack of formal integration rather than the lack of information experienced in the UK. The Committee has 20 full members (and 20 alternate members). It identifies itself as an advocate for long-term political responsibility in the context of sustainable development. Mr Wehling finally referred to two important issues: firstly, sustainability impact assessments should be developed and applied in practice; and secondly, parliamentary monitoring of NSDSs should be made a permanent mechanism.

Derek Osborn argued that it is difficult to generalise the experiences made in different Member States for the EU level. Due to the different political-administrative structures and political cultures, Member States are very special in their legislative and executive processes. Therefore, he suggested undertaking a comparative study on parliamentary scrutiny of sustainable development activities in Europe. He pointed out that many parliaments suffer the same 'silo tendency' than governments and have very departmentalised structures. Setting-up cross-sectoral committees like in the UK and Germany would be a significant move that should inspire other countries to follow. This also applies for the European level where the European Parliament would be the right institution to establish such a committee. Mr Osborn highlighted that holding government accountable on specific issues is an important aspect for policy delivery.

Plenary discussion

The participants discussed how the presented *parliamentary committees interact and network with other parliaments in Europe*. Whereas the German Parliamentary Commission is interacting with the European Parliament and other parliaments in the Member states, not many formal networking activities are in place at the Environmental Audit Committee in the UK. In many EU Member States there exist, however, no sustainable development committees similar to the ones in Germany and the UK.

The panellists were also asked to present some *advice on horizontal policy integration fro the EU SDS*: Gordon Clarke said that it would be important to take stock on what has been achieved in sustainable development over the last years and to develop clear recommendations on what needs to be achieved over the next 5, 10 and 15 years as a kind of 'framework for sustainable development action'. Dominik Wehling remarked that creating clear structures at the executive and legislative level would be important, e.g. creating a standing parliamentary committee on sustainable development with respective resources and capacities. Derek Osborn argued that there should be a more regular monitoring process of the EU SDS, e.g. annual updates and a dialogue between the Commission and the individual Member States on progress (similar to the Lisbon process). Furthermore, an independent body should be established that monitors and keeps pressure up for delivering sustainable development on the European level. Finally, the European Parliament should be encouraged to establish its own sustainable development committee.

Topic 3: Auditing and evaluation schemes

The third session of the workshop focused on auditing and evaluation schemes that assess how well sustainable development strategies and polices are implemented on the ground. The session was chaired by **Wolfram Tertschnig** (ESDN co-chair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria). A keynote presentation about Sustainability Auditing in Austria introduced the session, followed again by a panel and plenary discussion.

Keynote presentation: Sustainability Auditing in Austria

Heinrich Lang (Austrian Court of Auditors) pointed out that supreme audit institutions (SAIs) are watchdogs of the parliaments that undertake ex-post evaluations, e.g. financial audits, legal audits and performance audits (outcomes of programmes, expenditures). The various national SAIs are connected in various worldwide networks, e.g. [International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions \(INTOSAI\)](#). The Austrian Court of Auditors (CoA) undertakes audits on all political levels and reports to the legislative bodies (i.e. national and regional parliaments). Within the Austrian CoA, the department for comprehensive environmental protection is responsible for all environmental issues, but also cross-cutting issues like climate change and biodiversity. Within this department, there are specialists for all sectoral issues. Generally, the CoA has a somewhat weak position in the evaluation machinery as it has no formal enforcement power and cannot undertake follow-up inquiries on their recommendations or follow-up audits.

Mr Lang then outlined the challenges for SAIs in the context of sustainable development: different approaches to sustainable development on the different political levels, advisory bodies for political decisions and information provider for stakeholder groups, addressing all levels of government, and sustainable development is genuinely an interdisciplinary and cross-cutting issues (capacity-building and know-how are crucial factors). He also gave an overview of different approaches to SAIs, e.g. strategic setting (strategy available, quantified objectives), has the strategy made a difference in practice, specific policy issues and their relation to sustainable development, specific programmes and measures and their relation to sustainable development, providing best practice examples. Some important general approaches and ideas were also presented by Mr Lang: sustainable development is not a topic for specific networks and people only, sustainable development has to be integrated in the thinking of all government department and related administration, all legislative bodies need to be aware of sustainable development, and sustainable development needs high-level political support. He then outlined the four different audit scopes for sustainability auditing: (1) strategic setting at the national level, (2) strategic and operational setting at the regional level, (3) comparison of different approaches at all levels, (4) integration of sustainable development into daily work.

Panel discussion

After the keynote presentation, the following panellists discussed auditing and evaluation schemes on the European and Member States level: **Heinrich Lang** (Austrian Court of Auditors), **Nadine Gouzée** (Belgian Federal Planning Bureau) and **Hendrik Fehr** (European Court of Auditors).

Nadine Gouzée presented the Belgian auditing and evaluation schemes for sustainable development. She pointed out that these schemes are the outcome of 3 learning cycles of the Belgian Federal Sustainable Development Strategy and outlined the three types of reviews applied in Belgium: (a) monitoring reports on sustainable development policies by the internal administration, (b) full assessment reports on sustainable development by independent institutions and (c) audit reports of the SDS by the Belgian Court of Auditors. The Belgian experiences showed that different evaluation schemes can be mutually supportive.

Hendrik Fehr referred to the legal basis for making audits at the EU level. Generally, financial audits are the bulk of audits, but validity and availability issues have become major concerns. Cross-sectoral policy integration on the European level should be addressed by the different DGs, including areas with extensive budgets, e.g. Structural Funds. Mr Fehr argued that for a sustainability audit, qualitative assessments would be increasingly needed as quantitative figures do not tell much about processes and structures.

Heinrich Lang pointed out that most countries have different approaches in place for sustainable development. Moreover, the high number of 192 Supreme Court of Audits institutions makes it difficult to establish common standards. At the international level, a group of countries has been formed within [INTOSAI](#) that have similar interests (15 countries, plus the World Bank, on Kyoto targets). They have agreed on a set of assessment questions that are taken up by the different countries on the national level. In the EU, several national Courts of Auditors (CoAs) are dealing with sustainable development issues (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, UK). Generally, sustainable development is a growing topic and CoAs are trying to move from pure environmental auditing to sustainability auditing (which is an audit far beyond environmental auditing).

Nadine Gouzée remarked that experiences in Belgium showed that evaluation culture evolves rather slowly – evaluation culture does not genuinely exist, but marks a process that needs to ensure transparency. Moreover, the Belgian evaluation schemes were established after scandals over the last decades, so it was a response to concrete shortcomings. She pointed out that it would be important on the EU level to increase the knowledge of sustainable development and to work on a paradigm change. The danger for sustainable development would be, however, that much attention is currently moving towards climate change rather than an integrated approach.

Plenary discussion

The participants first discussed the **increased attention on climate change issues** and what this implies for sustainable development. Some participants said that the attention on climate change is also important for sustainable development; they argued that climate change measures comprise many sustainable development issues and a success at the Copenhagen Conference in December 2010 would also increase the chances of reaching progress in sustainable development.

As a second topic, the participants addressed the **capacities and training** necessary for auditing and evaluating sustainable development strategies and policies. Heinrich Lang was asked how this is guaranteed in Austria. He replied that education and training are important aspects that are taken very seriously by the Austrian Court of Auditors. Moreover, an understanding of sustainable development based on the national indicator system ('2 spheres model' – needs and resources) was promoted within the Court. A 'sustainability cluster' was established within the Court by bringing together experts with different sectoral expertise to exchange their views. Finally, staff members are required to attend national and international meetings and workshop to increase and update their knowledge on sustainable development issues.

Implication for governance mechanisms of the EU SDS

In the final session of the workshop, the participants discussed implications of the presented mechanisms and processes for the governance mechanisms of the EU SDS.

A representative of the Swedish EU Presidency pointed out that the current **review of the EU SDS** is addressed in a Presidency Report, which will be submitted for the Council meeting in December 2009, and in a debate about the EU SDS in the General Affairs Council (GAC). It was also stressed that Germany proposed in the Friends of the Presidency group to start the general review of the EU SDS already in 2010.

One participant argued that it would be more important to **include sustainable development issues into the day-to-day work of all sectoral DGs** rather than sticking only to the EU SDS and its objectives – thus the process is more important than the document. In this context, it would be important to include sustainable development into the strategic objectives of the new Commission for the next five years. Another participant remarked that the DGs of the European Commission should be encouraged to include a specific chapter on sustainable development in their annual activity reports (goals achieved and targets for the following year).

In the following, the participants discussed ***institutional arrangements and responsibilities for sustainable development on the EU level***. It was pointed out that the European Parliament should establish its own sustainable development committee. A push towards more parliamentary engagement for sustainable development in the future would be welcomed. Another suggestion was to provide a clear mandate for the SDS Coordinators Group and to hold more regular meetings than has previously been the case. Moreover, it was argued that increased political commitment is necessary to move sustainable development forward. Currently, there would be not enough ownership of the EU SDS at the EU level.

Annex I: List of participants

ESDN Workshop, "New Drive for Sustainable Development Strategies – The Power of Smart Linkages", Brussels, 3-4 November 2009

No.	Name	Institution	Country
1	Angeles Jiménez, Redondo	Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU	Spain
2	Baetens, Ine	SD Team, Services for the General Government Policy	Belgium
3	Bauernfeind, Stefan	Federal Chancellery	Germany
4	Berger, Gerald	ESDN Office	Austria
5	Stéphane Bernaudon	Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development & Spatial Planning	France
6	Bogaert, Tim	Federal Public Planning Service Sustainable Development	Belgium
7	Clarke, Gordon	Environmental Audit Committee	United Kingdom
8	Delbaere, Patricia	Federal Planning Bureau	Belgium
9	Dewandre, Nicole	European Commission, DG Research	Belgium
10	Doering, Christian	Federal Foreign Office	Germany
11	Fehr, Hendrik	European Court of Auditors	Luxembourg
12	Flowerday, Alexia	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	United Kingdom
13	Freytag, Elisabeth	ESDN Co-chair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria
14	Ghita, Luminita	Ministry of Environment	Romania
15	Gjoksi, Nisida	ESDN Office	Austria
16	Goossens, Yanne	Flemish Government - Environment, Nature and Energy Department - International	Belgium
17	Gouzée, Nadine	Federal Planning Bureau	Belgium
18	Haag, Marcel	European Commission, Secretariat-General	Belgium
19	Hannequart, Jean-Pierre	Bruxelles Environment - IBGE / Leefmilieu Brussel	Belgium
20	Hlavackova, Jaroslava	Government Council for SD, Ministry of Environment	Czech Republic
21	Holgate, Clair	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	United Kingdom
22	Hontelez, John	European Environment Bureau	Belgium
23	Hren, Marko	Government Office for Growth	Slovenia
24	Jakil, Ana	Federal Chancellery	Austria
25	Kavrán, Viktória	National Council for Sustainable Development	Hungary
26	Korzinek, Annika	SD Observatory, EESC	Belgium
27	Kraemer, R. Andreas	Ecologic Institute	Germany
28	Lang, Heinrich	Austrian Court of Auditors	Austria
29	Le Visage, Christophe	General Secretary of the Sea	France
30	Marquez, Rafael	Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs	Spain
31	Mayer-Ries, Jörg	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	Germany
32	Mortensen, Kirsten	Prime Minister's Office	Sweden
33	Nebe, Sandra	European Commission, DG Research	Belgium
34	Niestroy, Ingeborg	European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)	Belgium
35	Nilsson, Anne-Cerise	Ministry of Environment	Sweden

36	Osborn, Derek	SD Observatory, EESC	United Kingdom
37	Rihs, Martin	Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth	Austria
38	Rouhinen, Sauli	Ministry of the Environment	Finland
39	Scheller, Andrea	Eurostat	Luxembourg
40	Sutherland, Jim	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	United Kingdom
41	Sviden, Ulf	Prime Minister's Office	Sweden
42	Szczepinska, Agnieszka	Ministry of the Environment	Poland
43	Tertschnig, Wolfram	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management	Austria
44	Thonstad, Knut	Ministry of Finance	Norway
45	Van de Walle, Cédéric	Cabinet Office of the Belgian Minister for Climate and Energy	Belgium
46	Van der Beke, Dieter	Federal Public Planning Service Sustainable Development	Belgium
47	Van Sandick, Onno	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment	Netherlands
48	Von Homeyer, Ingmar	Ecologic Institute	Germany
49	Wehling, Dominik	Parliamentary Commission for Sustainable Development	Germany