

FOREWORD

An important feature of the OECD horizontal programme on sustainable development is assisting Member countries in developing and implementing sustainable policies and programmes at national level. Most OECD countries now have in place National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) as agreed as part of *Agenda 21* signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) in 1992.

In the past, the OECD and the United Nations developed general guidance for the formulation and content of these strategies which should be based on key principles such as integrated government approaches, long-term perspectives, consultation with stakeholders, and realistic targets. This study reviews the national sustainable development strategies of OECD countries for their accordance with these principles. It attempts to identify general good practices now in place with examples drawn from specific national strategies.

Through information sharing and discussion of what works and what doesn't, countries can improve the content and implementation of national sustainable development strategies in the OECD context. They can further share their experiences and insights with non-Member countries through joint work carried out with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and other international bodies.

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SUMMARY

Most OECD countries have developed and implemented national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) in accordance with the 1992 mandate of *Agenda 21*. The sustainable development strategy process offers an opportunity to build on the complementarities of programmes in the economic, environmental and social spheres to improve the long-term effectiveness of government policy agendas. However, a review of country strategies shows that many lack the basic design and implementation elements recommended by both the OECD and the United Nations.

Greater attention should be paid to the content of national sustainable development strategies (policy dimensions, timeframes, analytical tools), governance aspects (institutions, stakeholders, local links), and the processes for improving them (indicators, targets, monitoring). There is no single method, specific entry point or ideal co-ordinating mechanism for these strategies, which will reflect the economic, social, environmental and cultural specificities of countries.

An OECD review has attempted to identify successful practices in the national sustainable development strategies implemented in the different circumstances of the OECD countries as indicated below:

1. Policy integration – national strategies should give consideration to environmental, economic and social concerns in integrated approaches contained in national plans and reports.
2. Intergenerational timeframe – national strategies should adopt long-term timeframes which enable inclusion of intergenerational principles and indicators.
3. Analysis and assessments – integrated assessment tools should be used in national reports to identify the environmental, economic and social costs and benefits of policy and strategy options.
4. Co-ordination and institutions – a wide range of government departments and agencies should be involved in the formulation and

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implementation of national strategies, with overall responsibility in the office of the Prime Minister or equivalent.

5. Local and regional governance – local and regional authorities should be fully involved in the development of national strategies, with certain delivery aspects devolved to sub-national levels.
6. Stakeholder participation – stakeholders (e.g., business, unions, non-governmental organisations) should participate with government representatives in commissions responsible for developing and implementing national strategies.
7. Indicators and targets – strategies should be based on structured indicator systems (enumerated in national plans and reports) to assist in monitoring progress and to serve as quantitative targets.
8. Monitoring and evaluation – independent bodies or processes should be established to act as watchdogs monitoring implementation of national strategies and providing recommendations for their improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Governments first agreed to prepare national sustainable development strategies as part of *Agenda 21*, signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) in 1992. The purpose of these strategies was to translate the Summit's ideas and commitments into concrete policies and actions. Governments agreed to "adopt national strategies for sustainable development [which should] build upon and harmonise the various sectoral, economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country. Its goals should be to ensure socially responsible economic development for the benefit of future generations".

In 1997, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly met to review progress since the Rio Summit and set a target date of 2002 for introducing national sustainable development strategies. Subsequently, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) noted the lack of progress in strategy development and implementation. Countries were urged to "take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of NSDS and to begin their implementation by 2005". In addition, integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes is one of the targets contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Current status of strategies

According to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), much work remains to be done to reach the WSSD target that all countries should be in the process of implementing their NSDS by 2005. According to an assessment of the status of national strategies in 2004, only 12% of a total of 191 countries had strategies which were being implemented (UN DESA, 2004). However, another 24% had strategy

documents which were approved by governments or which were in the process of being developed.

National strategies in OECD countries

As for the 30 OECD countries, most have developed national sustainable development strategies in some form. Internet links to national sustainable development strategies and plans in OECD countries are given in the Annex.

Twenty-three OECD countries have prepared formal strategies or plans. Of these, Australia, Finland, France, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom formulated strategies relatively early and some (*e.g.*, the United Kingdom) have since revised their strategies. Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the Slovak Republic prepared their first national strategies more recently.

In 2001, the European Union also developed a sustainable development strategy for its Member countries (under revision in 2006), while a Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) was revised in 2005.

Seven OECD countries do not have national sustainable development strategies as such – Belgium, Canada, Hungary, Mexico, Spain, Turkey and the United States. In federal countries such as Belgium and Canada, it is more difficult to develop a comprehensive national strategy. In Belgium, the federal government adopted a sustainable development strategy and is now in the process of developing a national strategy together with the governments of the regions and communities. Canada has adopted a decentralised approach, where 28 federal departments and agencies have enumerated sustainable development strategies, and is now formulating an overall national plan.

Mexico has integrated sustainable development elements into existing national development plans rather than develop a separate strategy. Hungary, Spain and Turkey are in the process of developing national sustainable development strategies. The United States has emphasized public/private sustainable development partnerships to promote economic growth, social development and environmental stewardship.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIES

In 1992, Chapter 8 of *Agenda 21* first introduced the concept of national sustainable development strategies and gave initial guidance on how they should be constructed and what they should include. Other forums have attempted to provide further guidance to strategy development in the intervening period.

A NSDS is commonly thought to be a process (with a strong emphasis on learning) which leads to documents or plans that need to remain dynamic. There is a distinction between NSDS and strategy documents, which are tools to make the strategy explicit. Among these documents are official reports analysing and evaluating conditions and trends, programmes and plans recording the policies and actions agreed by the participants, and documents concerning stakeholder views and actions.

Views of national sustainable development strategies include:

- "a means of planning and taking actions to change or strengthen values, knowledge, technologies and institutions" (Carew-Reid et al. 1994).
- "a co-ordinated set of participatory and continuously improving processes of analysis, debate, capacity-strengthening, planning and investment, which integrates the economic, social and environmental objectives of society, seeking trade offs where this is not possible" (OECD, 2001).
- "SD strategies cannot be implemented like a 'plan', but need flexible approaches on the government side with at the same time firm and accountable objectives, and ideally also quantitative targets" (EEAC, 2005)

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In 2001, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) developed a set of guidelines to assist developing countries in formulating their national sustainable development strategies (OECD, 2001). These guidelines were based on a number of key elements such as broad consultation, country ownership, and realistic targets.

In 2002, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs also developed guidelines for preparing a national sustainable development strategy (UN DESA, 2002). These focused on five precepts:

- integrating economic, social and environmental objectives, and ensuring balance across sectors, territories and generations;
- ensuring broad participation and effective partnerships;
- promoting country ownership and commitment;
- developing capacity and an enabling environment; and
- focusing on outcomes and means of implementation.

Comparisons show that the UN and OECD guidelines are very similar with regard to a number of elements (Table 1). The degree to which OECD countries have followed these precepts is reviewed in the remainder of this document, which attempts to highlight good practices in their approaches. Future analysis could help to further refine these general guidelines to assist in the effective implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

Table 1. Comparison of UN and OECD Recommendations for National Sustainable Development Strategies

Main elements	OECD	United Nations
Policy integration	Integrate economic, social and environmental objectives Ensure comprehensive and integrated strategy	Integrate economic, social and environmental objectives Link different sectors
Inter-generational timeframe	Develop consensus on long-term vision.	Develop shared strategic and pragmatic vision Link short term to medium/long term
Analysis and assessments	Base strategy on comprehensive and reliable analysis Build on existing processes and strategies	Anchor strategy in sound technical and economic analysis Build on existing mechanisms and strategies
Co-ordination and institutions	Embed strategy in high-level government commitment and influential lead institutions	Ensure a strong institution or group of institutions spearheading the process
Local and regional governance	Link national and local levels	Link national, regional and global levels
Stakeholder participation	Ensure effective participation Develop a people-centred strategy	Ensure access to information for all stakeholders, transparency and accountability Develop partnerships among government, civil society, private sector and external institutions
Indicators and targets	Include targets with clear budgetary priorities	Base strategy on realistic, flexible targets
Monitoring and evaluation	Incorporate monitoring, learning and improvement	Include integrated mechanisms for assessment, follow-up, evaluation and feedback

Source: OECD, 2001; UN DESA 2002.

POLICY INTEGRATION

Sustainable development has been defined a variety of ways, but in practice it has come to mean development that achieves a balance among economic, environmental and social objectives for both present and future generations. The integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development is one of the most difficult balances to achieve in formulating a national strategy. In practice, most national strategies have a greater focus on environmental issues with some attempts to incorporate economic aspects. The social pillar has been the most neglected. As a result, few national strategies develop abilities for considering and making trade-offs among the three areas in overall policy-making.

Most countries emphasize environmental components in their sustainable development strategies. For example, the main focus of the Danish strategy is on integrating environmental considerations into a number of specific sectors. The Australian Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development focuses on environmental concerns such as coastal zone management. Japan's strategy is basically an environmental plan focused on materials recycling, global warming and biodiversity, while Korea's strategy is based on the National Environmental Vision for the New Millennium. Canada has developed departmental strategies according to "A Guide to Green Government" to pursue the environmental health of the country.

The social element is the dimension the least integrated in national strategies. Whereas these often include social goals, sometimes with indicators, social objectives are generally listed alongside other objectives and rarely melded into a comprehensive strategy. There are also large differences across countries in how they interpret this notion – from a focus on the health consequences of environmental policies, to concerns about ethnic minorities and gender balance, to broader considerations about the quality of life, sustainable consumption and social relations (poverty, crime, employment, education).

A few countries (*e.g.*, Belgium, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden) have succeeded in integrating social elements in their strategies. For example, in 2005, Germany outlined its progress on the Road Map for Sustainability, which addresses employment, ageing, pension and family issues as well as corporate social responsibility.

Some countries have extended social considerations from the domestic to the international sphere. Norway counts among its social sustainability goals the need to increase development assistance and imports from developing countries. Portugal's national strategy includes guidelines for reinforcing development co-operation, especially with Portuguese speaking countries, and moving towards the target of devoting 0.7% of GDP to official development aid.

Box 1. Good Practices in Policy Integration: Including the Social Element

Belgium – The Belgian federal government was the first, in 1999, to promote the integration of social components (*i.e.* facing the challenge of poverty in both poor and rich countries) in its strategy for sustainable development.

New Zealand – *Sustainable Development in New Zealand* gives equal weight to social sustainable development (in relation to the economy and environment) with special attention to demographic trends, new roles of women in society, improvements in health and housing, and better integration of Maori communities.

Sweden – Social considerations are well integrated into the Swedish *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* including the fight against poverty, sustainable consumption and production, population and public health, social cohesion, welfare and security, employment and learning, and regional and community development.

INTERGENERATIONAL TIMEFRAME

In addition to balancing economic, environmental and social objectives, a basic tenet of sustainable development is the need to balance the needs of current and future generations. This is reflected in the definition of sustainable development from the 1987 Brundtland Report as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. For well-being to last, the stocks of assets that underpin it (*e.g.*, man-made, natural, human and social capital) must be preserved over time. National strategies for sustainable development need a long timeframe for implementing notions of intergenerational equity, a fundamental principle of sustainable development.

The national strategies of most countries have specific short-term timeframes (*e.g.* 2000-2005). Others have medium-term timeframes of ten years, *e.g.*, the Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development covers the years 2004 to 2014. While this may facilitate monitoring progress on specific goals and dealing with short- and medium-term change, it leaves national strategies open to political vulnerabilities. Although some strategies have an inherent renewal expectation or periodic renewals required by law, they may still be subject to the ideological or political whims of successive governments. Strategic planning frameworks are more likely to be successful when they are based on a long-term vision backed by a strong and lasting political commitment.

To this end, some countries have taken timeframes of 20 to 30 years in their national strategies for sustainable development. Sweden's strategy has a 25-year planning perspective, while allowing that measures taken in accordance with the strategy may need to be reassessed more frequently. The Danish strategy contains objectives and benchmarks for a 20-year timeframe, while the German strategy developed in 2002 contains quantified and time-bound indicators extending to 2020. Iceland's national strategy also extends from 2002 to 2020 and is meant to be a dynamic document responding to changes in circumstances and emphasis. The perspective of Poland's strategy is given in its title, *Poland 2025: Long-Term Strategy for Sustainable Development*.

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While a longer timeframe allows for better incorporation of intergenerational considerations, these are difficult to define and quantify. Finland and a few other countries have included indicators relating to intergenerational concerns in their strategies. In economic terms, these might relate to relieving public debt, in environmental terms, concern for the preservation of resources, and in social terms, the provision of adequate retirement incomes. For the environmental dimension, for example, the Swedish strategy states that “the overall objective of environmental policy is to hand over a society to the next generation in which the major environmental problems have been solved”. The French strategy advocates intergenerational solidarity with a focus on caring for the elderly and facilitating the transmission of competencies across generations.

Box 2..Good Practices in Including Intergenerational Considerations

Finland -- The *Finnish Government's Programme for Sustainable Development* includes intergenerational indicators in its sustainable development monitoring, such as government financial liabilities and preservation of biodiversity.

Germany – In economic terms, the *Strategy for Sustainable Development* defines intergenerational equity as avoiding high public debt and short-term economic decisions that could increase burdens on future generations.

Sweden – The *Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Development* adopted an inter-generational timeframe which includes a vision for the future which should remain valid for a generation or at least 25 years.

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENTS

Sound analysis is important in helping to identify the underlying trade-offs between economic, environmental and social objectives in priority-setting and policymaking for sustainable development. Such assessments seek to develop information on changing economic, environmental and social conditions, pressures and responses, and their correlations with strategy objectives and indicators. These can build on existing tools including environmental assessments, cost-benefit analyses, accounting frameworks, etc. However, with the exception of a few countries, most national strategies lack provisions for systematically assessing the costs and benefits of alternative actions and informing trade-offs across the full range of sustainable development issues.

The most commonly used tools come from the environmental policy field. Environmental impact assessments (EIA) attempt to gauge the potential ecological effects of policies before they are implemented. In Canada, the Cabinet Directive on the Environmental Assessment of Policy, Plan and Program Proposals requires that government agencies incorporate environmental considerations in their reviews of various proposals, including positive and negative effects, and report these to the public. Other countries – including Denmark, Greece, Italy and Spain – use strategic environmental assessments (SEA) to discern potential outcomes. Ireland and Portugal employ SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis for sustainability assessments and priority setting.

Analysis of impacts and linkages can also be accomplished through budget mechanisms which reveal links between spending decisions and sustainable development impacts. In the Netherlands, each ministry is requested to give an overview of their contribution to sustainable development in their annual budget to be discussed in Parliament. Sweden, Norway and a few other countries have similar green budgeting approaches which outline the potential sustainable development impacts related to public spending on proposed policies and programmes.

More sophisticated analytical tools are now being tried in certain countries. Switzerland uses a new tool, Strategic Sustainability Assessments, in its planning processes to review sustainable development linkages and the overall effects of potential policies and actions. Similarly, the European Union strategy advocates assessments of major legislative proposals, which should include, where relevant, the effects of gender equality and equal opportunities and identify the groups who bear the burden of change so that policy makers can judge the need for measures to help these groups adapt. The United Kingdom maintains a central interdepartmental requirement linked to regulatory assessments for evaluating the sustainability impacts of policies.

Box 3. Good Practices in Analysis and Assessments

European Union – The *European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development* established that all major legislative proposals should undergo Sustainability Assessments, meaning “an assessment of the potential economic, environmental and social benefits and costs of action or lack of action, both inside and outside the EU”.

Switzerland – Strategic Sustainability Assessment is used in the Swiss strategy to evaluate the effects of draft legislation and projects in terms of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development and indicate potential deficiencies early enough in the process to influence the direction taken.

United Kingdom – In implementing its *Sustainable Development Strategy*, the United Kingdom integrated its policy appraisal approaches into the Cabinet Office’s Regulatory Impact Assessment process to require departments to assess the sustainability impacts of policy proposals and link this to mainstream public consultation processes.

CO-ORDINATION AND INSTITUTIONS

Achieving sustainable development depends a great deal on high-level political commitment, well-functioning government institutions and overcoming co-ordination failures in public policies. Involving and co-ordinating a wide range of government departments allows strategies to take a broad view of issues, give voice to a range of dispersed interests and develop trade-offs across policy areas. Most OECD countries have set up inter-agency or inter-ministerial co-ordinating committees for sustainable development, which provide an overarching integrative body and framework for action.

Also important is where responsibility is placed for overseeing the co-ordinating mechanism and the different participating agencies. In most OECD countries, overall responsibility for strategy implementation is housed in the Ministry of Environment either directly or indirectly through a co-ordinating committee which it oversees. This is true for countries such as Austria, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Although the United Kingdom replaced its Green Cabinet with a Sustainable Development Cabinet, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) leads the preparation of sustainable development strategies and manages implementation across the government.

A good practice is to assign overall co-ordination to a Prime Minister's office or the equivalent which has greater authority to demand inputs and resolve conflicts than line ministries. France, Finland, Portugal and Germany have placed responsibility for their national sustainable development strategies directly under the Prime Minister's office to achieve maximum coherence. In the Belgian federal government, the responsibility for strategy implementation is under the State Secretary for Sustainable Development who chairs the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development (ICDO) including all federal departments.

Another approach is to assign responsibility for national sustainability strategies to Finance Ministries, which can assure that strategic management is linked to fiscal priority setting, national expenditure and revenue generation. Thus, Norway has placed responsibility for its sustainable development plan in the Ministry of Finance, while in the Czech Republic, the Governmental Council for Sustainable Development is chaired by the Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs, and in Italy, the Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning, which is responsible for sustainable development, is chaired by the Minister of Economy and Finance.

Box 4. Good Practices in Co-ordination and Institutions

Finland – The National Commission on Sustainable Development, responsible for the preparation and implementation of the national strategy, is chaired by the Prime Minister.

France – The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development (CIDD), chaired by the Prime Minister, has overall responsibility for France's sustainable development strategy.

Germany – The Federal Chancellery is formally in charge of both the formulation and implementation of the national strategy for sustainable development, overseeing the input of various Ministries and retaining the last word in inter-ministerial disagreements.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

Sustainable development strategies should involve local authorities and be a two-way iterative process between national and decentralised levels. The main strategic principles and directions should be set at the central level, but more detailed planning, implementation and monitoring can also be undertaken at a decentralised level, with appropriate transfer of resources and authority. But promoting sustainable development effectively when governments with different geographical jurisdictions may be pursuing various agendas is complex. Only a few OECD governments have attempted to catalyse and fully co-ordinate with the sustainable development efforts at sub-national government levels.

Co-ordination among different levels of government, which is important for leveraging important changes, is inherently more difficult in federal states where powers over sustainable development policies are divided among levels of government. The institutional structure in federal countries – *e.g.*, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland – is different than those in more centralised countries and special procedures may be needed to implement sustainable development strategies. In Belgium, for example, the federal government has adopted a formal Strategy for Sustainable Development, while the communities and regions have integrated the principles of sustainable development into their strategic plans.

Some countries have developed separate but equal approaches for devolved regions. The United Kingdom developed a UK strategic framework for sustainable development, but emphasised delivery through a set of national strategies at the regional level covering the UK government and administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. France devotes attention to the “territories” in its sustainable development strategy which encompasses both regional and sub-regional levels of government.

Countries such as France and Portugal have fully included local and regional authorities in the preparation of their national sustainable development strategies. The United Kingdom has a strong local component in its strategy, including Local Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Community Plans. Some countries, *e.g.* Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Korea, are co-ordinating national and local implementation of sustainable development strategies through local Agenda 21 processes. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 contains guidance for local initiatives in support of its overall goals where local authorities are asked to develop their own sub-strategies to suit their economies and specific circumstances.

Box 5: Good Practices in Local and Regional Governance

Korea – In the context of the *National Environmental Vision for the New Millennium*, regional governments have adopted a Local Agenda 21 which is co-ordinated by the Korean Council for Local Agenda 21.

Netherlands – The *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* gives general guidance for sustainability processes at sub-national levels which are to be tailored to the local situation.

United Kingdom – The UK's shared framework for sustainable development, *One Future-Different Paths*, establishes common goals for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland without compromising the strengths offered by regional delivery and a diversity of approaches.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Active stakeholder participation (*e.g.*, business, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, indigenous peoples) in the development and implementation of national strategies for sustainable development should be an inherent feature. Sustainable development involves trade-offs among economic, social and ecological objectives which cannot be determined by governments alone. These value judgments require participatory approaches to sustainable development which engage the public through effective communication. However, the extent to which stakeholders are involved in policy processes reflects national institutional settings and preferences. Structures vary widely across OECD countries in terms of the status, timing and breadth of involvement of stakeholders.

Several countries have implemented *ad hoc* participation processes, where stakeholders were consulted in the development of national strategies, but less so regarding implementation and further development. Public surveys of varying magnitudes have been used to solicit comments on draft strategies. Thus in Belgium, the Preliminary Draft Plan for sustainable development was placed on a public website and subsidies were given to public interest associations to support information projects related to the consultation.

In Finland, stakeholder groups were asked to prepare their own sustainable development strategies in parallel to the government strategy as part of the National Sustainable Development Partnership Process. Italy implemented two rounds of consultation with stakeholder groups in developing the national strategy and maintained a website for general public consultation.

Some countries include stakeholders in special commissions and councils which provide advice to but are separate from the government bodies which implement the strategy. These include the Federal Sustainable Development Council (CFDD) in Belgium, the National Council for Sustainable Development (CNDD) in France, the Council on Sustainable Development (RNE) in Germany, the National Sustainable Development Council in Ireland, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) in the

United Kingdom, and the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy (NRTEE) in Canada.

Other countries include stakeholders alongside government bodies as part of their overall co-ordination structure for sustainable development. These include the Forum for a Sustainable Austria, the Government Council for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic, the National Commission on Sustainable Development in Finland, the National Sustainable Development Council in Ireland, the Board of Sustainable Development in Poland, the Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS) in Portugal, and the Commission for Sustainable Development in the Slovak Republic. Ideally, national strategies for sustainable development should be implemented by bodies with wide representation from the social partners and other stakeholders to promote consultation, dialogue and more innovative approaches.

Box 6. Good Practices in Stakeholder Participant

Czech Republic – The Government Council for Sustainable Development includes government, business, academics, NGOs and other stakeholders and serves as the umbrella group for developing, implementing and revising the national sustainable development strategy.

Portugal – One of the four principles of the national strategy (*Estratégia Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável*) is to progress towards a society of solidarity and knowledge, including through interventions to strengthen the citizen components of education and greater access to information and participation in decision-making, which is exemplified in the Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Slovak Republic -- The Slovak Republic had broad consultations with stakeholders in the development of its national strategy and includes the main business and non-governmental groups on the *Slovakian Commission for Sustainable Development* to oversee implementation.

INDICATORS AND TARGETS

The development and incorporation of quantitative indicators can help remove discrepancies between the intentions set out in national strategies and what is or can be realised in practice. Statistics and indicators make it far easier to identify and assess trade-offs among the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development. Indicators can be used to track progress along sustainable paths and provide the foundation for performance targets. They also contribute to policy transparency and accountability in sustainable development strategies.

Most OECD countries have developed a set of indicators in association with their national strategies. These indicators vary widely across countries and are generally organised according to certain themes and sub-themes. Some strategies specify relatively few (mostly environmental) indicators. Others have adopted large indicator systems. The New Zealand Programme of Action is based on 40 indicators on the themes of population changes, environmental and ecosystem resilience, economic growth and innovation, skills and knowledge, living standards and health, consumption and resource use, and social cohesion. Switzerland monitors sustainable development according to the MONET indicator system, which includes 115 indicators for 26 themes to track the current situation and trends as well as the country's position relative to other countries.

A few countries are refining their structural approaches and choice of indicators as they revise their national strategies. In Norway, a special Commission proposed a new indicator set to underpin the Norwegian Action Plan for Sustainable Development, *National Agenda 21*. This includes 16 indicators that reflect the value, defined as the welfare effects, of the various components of national wealth: financial capital, real capital, human capital, natural capital and environmental capital. Finland developed its first set of indicators in 2000 and revised and broadened them in 2004 to include 68 indicators in eight categories and three sustainable development dimensions.

Some countries regularly track their progress on the basis of sustainability indicators and a few have established quantified time-bound targets. Thus, the German strategy uses indicators -- in fiscal, economic, education, research, housing, spatial planning, crime prevention, energy and environment areas – as targets. The United Kingdom’s new strategy, *Securing the Future*, contains 68 indicators, all of which are linked to specific quantifiable goals, with progress reported annually and a “traffic light” approach used to show areas of improvement and deterioration.

Box 7. Good Practices in Indicators and Targets

Austria – The *Austrian Strategy for Sustainable Development* specifies 52 indicators in four action fields – quality of life in Austria, Austria as a dynamic business location, Austria as a living space, and Austria’s global responsibility – and includes 20 key objectives with quantified time-bound goals.

Czech Republic – The Czech strategy outlines two sets of indicators, each organised according to six categories: economic, environmental, social, research and development and education, European and international context, and good governance. One set (116 indicators) is used to monitor progress on specific elements, while the other (24 indicators) is used in communications with policy makers and the public.

Ireland – The government’s work programme to develop indicators of sustainable development to implement the *Strategy for Ireland* includes the formulation of green national accounts and satellite accounting approaches to supplement economic accounts.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

National strategies for sustainable development are not meant to be static plans. Rather, they should evolve as more information becomes available about priorities, technological options and policy cost-effectiveness and in order to overcome problems in implementation. Learning, adaptation and continual improvement should be characteristics of national strategies. This requires a process to monitor strategy implementation, to report to governing bodies and stakeholders, and to feed back information for adjustments and improvements. For example, Austria has committed to a “Learning Strategy” which emphasises reporting and communication in order to widen participation in the development and implementation of the national sustainable development strategy.

Both Canada and the United Kingdom have opted for an independent auditing process as learning tools for sustainable development. In Canada, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) in the Office of the Auditor General is responsible for reporting to Parliament on the extent to which departments are implementing and achieving the objectives laid out in their sustainable development strategies. These strategies must be reviewed, revised and retabled every three years, providing a regular opportunity for learning and adaptation.

In the United Kingdom, the role of the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), established in 2000, was strengthened in 2005 to change it from “critical friend” to “watchdog” utilising both the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission to oversee implementation of the national strategy. New Zealand has appointed a similar but more limited Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, who primarily audits the Environment Ministry.

Other countries are also developing oversight bodies. Belgium attributed this task to the Federal Planning Bureau where a task force periodically reports on the quality of the federal government’s sustainable development policies and programmes. Belgium adopted a legal framework in 1997 instituting a process of consecutive rounds of reporting, planning, consultation and monitoring of policies. In 2004, Germany established a

Parliamentary Committee for Sustainable Development which calls plenary debates and gives recommendations to the federal government regarding strategy implementation.

France has a unique peer review process to promote experience sharing with other countries in support of the continuous improvement of its national strategy. It developed a methodology and subjected its own strategy to a peer review in February 2005 by a group including four peer partner countries – Belgium, Ghana, Mauritius and the United Kingdom. The peers made 13 general and 42 specific recommendations including how to promote sustainable development partnerships with developing countries, establish more participatory processes and ensure effective monitoring of the national sustainable development strategy. The French hope “that this approach will be found to have generic value that can be used (and developed further) by other countries through similar exercises.”

Box 8: Good Practices in Monitoring and Evaluation

Canada – A Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CESD) was established in 1995 through amendments to the Auditor General Act to audit the sustainable development strategies of different government departments and report each year to Parliament on progress and challenges in implementation.

France – France has developed a methodology for peer reviews of national strategies for sustainable development involving civil society, international organisations and other countries which make recommendations on the process, content, indicators and implementation approaches.

United Kingdom – The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) has been assigned a reinforced “watchdog” role beginning in 2006, whereby it will monitor implementation of the UK strategy and report regularly to the Prime Minister on strengths and weaknesses.

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ANNEX: INTERNET LINKS TO OECD NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Country	Titles and URLs
Australia	National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992) www.deh.gov.au/esd
Austria	A Sustainable Future for Austria: The Austrian Strategy for Sustainable Development (2002) www.nachhaltigkeit.at/strategie/pdf/strategie020709_en.pdf www.nachhaltigkeit.at/strategie.php3?strat_strategie.php3 www.lebensministerium.at/index
Belgium	Federal Plan for Sustainable Development (2004-2008) www.cidb.fgov.be/pub/PL200401/PL200401en.pdf www.cidb.fgov.be/pub/detail_pub.stm?pub=PL200401&TPub=Plan www.cidb.fgov.be
Canada	A Guide to Green Government (1995) www.sdinfor.gc.ca/reports/en/ggg/Default.cfm
Czech Republic	The Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development (2004) wtd.vlada.cz/files/rvk/rur/final_sds_cr_-eng.pdf http://wtd.vlada.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=5391 wtd.vlada.cz/eng/vybory.htm
Denmark	Denmark's National Strategy for Sustainable Development: A Shared Future - Balanced Development (2002) www.mst.dk/udgiv/publications/2002/87-7972-279-2/pdf/87-7972-259-8.pdf www.mst.dk/udgiv/publications/2002/87-7972-279-2/html/default_eng.htm
Finland	The Finnish Government Programme for Sustainable Development (1998) www.environment.fi/download.asp?contentid=6081&lan=en www.environment.fi/default.asp?node=9732&lan=en
France	Stratégie Nationale de Développement Durable : Enraciner l'Avenir dans l'Action (2003) www.ecologie.gouv.fr/article.php3?id_article=4177 www1.environnement.gouv.fr/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=680 www1.environnement.gouv.fr/article.php3?id_article=1198
Germany	Perspectives for Germany - Our Strategy for Sustainable Development (2002) www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/service/download_e/pdf/Perspectives_for_Germany.pdf www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/service/links_e/05.html www.bundesregierung.de/Politikthemen/Nachhaltige-Entwicklung-11409/Die-Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie-d.htm www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-e/sustgerm.htm

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Greece	The Greek National Strategy towards Sustainable Development (2002) www.minev.gr/4/41/000/nssd-english-final.pdf www.minev.gr/4/41/e4100.html
Hungary	Conceptual Elements and Requirements for the Preparation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy - Discussion Paper (2004) www.rec.hu/sdconference/doc/V4SDHudraftsdstrategy2.doc
Iceland	Welfare for the Future - Iceland's National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2002) eng.umhverfisraduneyti.is/media/PDF_skurar/Sjalfbar_roun_enska.pdf www.environment.is/
Ireland	Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland (1997) http://www.environ.ie/DOE/DOEIPol.nsf/0/62d49d52d4bc449780256f0f003bc7ea/\$FILE/Sustainable%20Development%20StrategyCOPY.pdf www.environ.ie/DOE/DOEIPol.nsf/wNavView/Sustainable+Development:+A+Strategy+for+Ireland?OpenDocument&Lang=#1
Italy	Strategia d'azione ambientale per lo sviluppo sostenibile in Italia (2002) www.minambiente.it/SVS/svs/docs/strategia_azione_ambientale.pdf
Japan	Basic Environment Plan (2000) www.env.go.jp/en/index.html
Korea	National Environmental Vision for the New Millennium (2003) eng.me.go.kr/user/index.html
Luxembourg	Plan National pour un Développement Durable (1997) www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/publications/PNDD_1999_brochure/PNDD_brochure_00_07_PDF.pdf www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/publications/PNDD_1999_brochure/index.html www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/index.html?SID=84e07e9506a7cae52ed8c98f0af3d80
Mexico	Programa para Promover el Desarrollo Sustentable en el Gobierno Federal (2002) www.semarnat.gob.mx/semarnat/portal
Netherlands	A National Strategy for Sustainable Development - What Choices Must the Government Make (2001) www2.vrom.nl/Docs/internationaal/2695%20NSDO%20Samenvatting%20ENG.pdf www2.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=7388
New Zealand	Sustainable Development in New Zealand Programme of Action (2002) www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/sus-dev/sus-dev-programme-of-action-jan03.html www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/susdev/

Norway	Norway's National Plan of Action for Sustainable Development National Agenda 21 (2003) http://odin.dep.no/filarkiv/206402/nat_action.pdf
Poland	Poland 2025 Long-term Strategy for Sustainable Development www.rec.hu/sdconference/doc/PL_strategia.doc www.mos.gov.pl/index_main.shtml www.ceu.cz/edu/ma21/strategy_poland.htm
Portugal	National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2002) www.iambiente.pt/ngt_server/ngtifs/IFileDialog.jsp?path=/Servidor/5829/ENDSing.pdf&action=7 www.iambiente.pt/docs/5421/ENDS_dp.pdf
Slovak Republic	National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the Slovak Republic (2002) www.tur.sk/doc_en/Slovakia_NSSD_Final.pdf www.tur.sk/index.stm?apc=0-5ed5460afc52a69ce1aa16a204115b39-1-1&x=86783
Sweden	A Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Development - Economic, Social and Environmental (2003) www.sweden.se/upload/Sweden_se/english/publications/RK/PDF/RK%20Sustainable%20development.pdf www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2066
Switzerland	Sustainable Development Strategy (2002) www.are.admin.ch/are/en/nachhaltig/strategie/index.html www.are.admin.ch/are/en/nachhaltig/
United Kingdom	Securing the Future - UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/documents/publications/strategy/SecFut_complete.pdf www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/uk-strategy-2005.htm www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/index.htm
United States	Sustainable Development Partnerships www.sdp.gov/sdp/usgweb/
European Union	EU Strategy for Sustainable Development (2001) www.europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/review_en.htm
Nordic Council of Ministers	Sustainable Development – New Bearings for the Nordic Countries (2005) www.norden.org/baeredygtig_udvikling/uk