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a benchmark study on national strategies towards
sustainable development and the impact of councils
in nine EU member states



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2 Finland

BOTTOM-UP APPROACH AS BELIEF SYSTEM, SUCCESSFUL IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, STRATEGIC LINES AND LINKING THE SD DIMENSIONS REMAIN RATHER WEAK

- Longest history as a frontrunner in SD policies; started with an environmental focus and has broadened over time; success in the former is reflected in top-ranking in the Environmental Sustainability Index (2002).
- Very strong bottom-up approach and SD as a learning process (society, government and research).
- The link between indicators and objectives is deficient, and quantitative objectives are only partly in place through sectoral programs: discussions are currently ongoing to determine whether a new SDS should be prepared (first strategy from 1998, evaluation in 2002/2003), inter alia in order to improve this.
- SD council as a dialogue mechanism between government and stakeholders; PM chairing is intended to provide a direct link to highest level.
- Broad stakeholder involvement, though conflicts are not addressed explicitly; when preparing the SDS, stakeholders were asked to prepare their own strategies, which mainly followed this request; around 80% of the municipalities have started LA 21 processes.



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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| <i>PM</i> | <i>Prime Minister (the position of Head of Government is called Prime Minister, in Finnish "pääministeri")</i> |
| <i>MinE</i> | <i>In Finland this is the Ministry of the Environment ("YM")</i> |
| <i>SDC</i> | <i>The SD council is called "SD Commission"</i> |

A Actors and Process

1 GOVERNMENT: SDS PROCESS, GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

1.1 SD strategies' development

Predecessors of a SD strategy:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1990 | Council of State (cabinet with President or PM chairing) report "Sustainable Development and Finland" was presented to Parliament |
| 1993 | Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD) established: a round-table of government and stakeholders, chaired by PM |
| 1995 | National Action program prepared by the FNCSD ("Finnish Action for Sustainable Development") |
| 1995 | <i>New Government</i> |
| | <i>SD strategy</i> |
| 1996 | On the basis of the government program, which includes the intention to prepare a national SDS in order to implement the Rio commitments, the MinE established a "strategy group", composed of civil servants from relevant Ministries |
| June 1998 | Council of State adopts the SD strategy |
| 2000 | A first set of SD indicators ("Signs of sustainability") were prepared by a group of experts, government and stakeholders, and (formally) adopted by the FNCSD |
| 2002 | Draft progress report SDS for the WSSD prepared by MinE; update of the indicators |
| June 2003 | Progress report "Evaluation of SD in Finland" |
| 2004 | Establishment of a National Committee on Sustainable Consumption and Production to prepare a 10-year plan; it will work in cooperation with the FNCSD |
| July 2004 | Publication of a final revised set of indicators |

Assessment:

Based on previous work on SD policies, a (new) government in 1995 included in its government program the intention to prepare a SD strategy, which led to the establishment of the inter-ministerial Working Group in 1996, made up of almost all Ministries (around 20) that elaborated a proposal during an intensive cooperation process over two years (35 meetings 1996 - 1998), partly also with input from stakeholders¹. The Council of State adopted the document proposed by that Working Group as "decision-in-principle", which means it adopted the strategic goals and lines of action.² A decision of the

¹ *Mainly via the Finnish SD council (most members of the Working Group were also members of the FNCSD 'network secretariat', cf. ch. A.3); at the same time stakeholder groups were asked to prepare their own SD strategies (cf. ch. A.2.2).*

² *This type of decision also means that it is binding for the government, but is not approved by Parliament (cf. also ch. A.1.3.2).*

Council of State, which is chaired by the President or the PM, gave the SDS more political weight.³

The decision to prepare a SDS was a result of previous steps/reports on SD policies, which Finland started after the Rio conference, then with a focus on ecological sustainability, covering mainly policies that were already ongoing. It is hence, together with UK and Sweden, a frontrunner country in SD policies. After 1995 it was aimed at becoming more 'strategic', broadening the SD agenda and integrating all 'three' dimensions: This intention proved to be difficult at that time and hence it is stated that the SDS "is designed to promote ecological sustainability and economic, social and cultural preconditions for achieving this end."

More success for an overarching approach for SD was achieved by the expert network that elaborated the set of SD indicators between 2000 and 2004, which is in itself seen as an indication for the need to consider SD as an intertwined learning process of government, societal groups and research. The 2002/2003 progress report was a full evaluation of the government program, and also identified gaps in policy fields, which became "new challenges", for which new indicators were also developed. This contributed to the broadening of the SD agenda.

Overall, Finland has a very strongly emphasised cooperative approach both within government (cf. ch. A.1.2) and regarding involvement of stakeholders and other levels (cf. ch. A.1.4, 2, 3), the latter reflecting a bottom-up attitude towards SD, which is both encouraged and dedicated. In fact, many actors do not consider the SD *strategy* as important, but place greater emphasis on the commitment and actions of all parts of society.⁴

The SDS mainly seems to fall short in:

- setting quantitative targets, which is partly done in sectoral programs, but not repeated in the SDS progress report: it is assumed that the sectoral programs support the overall SD program, which also reflects an emphasis on the self-commitment of all actors. Only some of the sectoral Ministries used their respective indicators (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry); they were not directly used in the evaluation report;
- linking objectives and indicators.

At the same time, Finland has developed some ambitious quantitative targets within sectoral programs (not linked to the SDS, cf. ch. A.1.3.1 below).

Conflicts between interests are addressed through continuous dialogue, which is emphasised as the most important feature. The conviction that in Finland everybody "has understood what SD is" is may be rather euphemistic.

The SD strategy is still mainly assessed as concentrating on ecological

³ *The Council of State is a rather unique constitutional body in Finland, which reflects a shared executive power between the government/cabinet and the President.*

⁴ *"You don't need a biblical book, when you behave decently."*

sustainability, and the three ‘pillars’ as still being rather separate, which might reveal a need to revise the lead responsibility and coordination mechanisms. Progress in environmental integration is a clear focus (even called “the national Cardiff process”). It is currently deliberated whether Finland needs a “new” SDS, i.e. a full revision of the 1998 SDS, which is intended to improve the previously mentioned shortcomings regarding quantitative targets, and the linking of objectives, targets and indicators.

1.2 LEAD RESPONSIBILITY AND HORIZONTAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

From the very beginning, in Finland the Prime Minister has been responsible for SD policies, together with other relevant Ministers. The PM’s main responsibility is reflected in chairing the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD), which was established directly after the Rio conference (1993) by the Minister of the Environment as a platform for dialogue between the government and stakeholder groups, for promoting SD in Finland and to act as an advisory body (cf. ch. A.3).

The FNCSD has six Ministers as members⁵ and high-level civil servants from all other relevant Ministries. The Ministers are nominated by the parties in the government. Depending on the specific issue that is put on the agenda, the meetings are attended by other relevant Ministers, which gives political weight to SD policies. The FNCSD is not a body for stakeholder dialogue ‘among each other’.

On the government side, inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation are closely linked to the FNCSD, as the focal points of Ministries concerned and other government organisations (around 30 individuals) form a “network secretariat” for the FNCSD.⁶ It is informally led by the MinE, and a specific “operational secretariat” responsible for preparatory work for the FNCSD and the inter-ministerial network ‘secretariat’ is based there. Within the PM’s office there is also a “political advisor” responsible for SD, who cooperates with the secretariat of the FNCSD in setting its agenda.

The structural situation regarding cooperation between Ministries is rather favourable: the country has seen broad coalition governments, which typically require more consensus building. Also the fact that the President shares executive power with the government increases the need for agreements. The dialogue-negotiating style is also reflected in (originally informal) meetings of Ministers, leaders of the government parties and, where appropriate, invited experts or stakeholders, which take place in preparation for the government’s weekly cabinet meetings and are called “evening school” (“iltakoulu”)⁷. This iltakoulu also debated the proposed SDS, before it was adopted by the Council of State.

In addition to the FNCSD, there are many sectoral or issue-specific Working Groups which meet either on an ad-hoc or more permanent basis. Besides

5 Minister of the Environment as vice-chair; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development, Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Minister of Labor, and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Although considered as the most powerful Minister, the Minister of Finance was not nominated.

6 From each government body there are 1-2 persons, from some Ministries even more (MinE, Health and Social Affairs, Trade and Commerce, Agriculture and Forestry).

7 Auffermann, 2003, p. 198/199.

civil servants from relevant Ministries, most of these groups include stakeholder members, which reflects Finland's tradition of stakeholder involvement.⁸ These groups are established by individual Ministries committed to implementing the SDS (not all are), which is considered as important for promoting ownership. Since the end of 2002, the FNCSD itself no longer has working groups or sub-committees. In 2004, though, the FNCSD established a sub-committee on Education for Sustainable Development. The members of the sub-committee have the same background as the commission members. As already proposed in the government programme (2003), at the end of 2003 the MinE established a new National Committee on Sustainable Production and Consumption, also composed of civil servants and non-governmental members; it is meant to work closely with the FNCSD, and half the members (government and NGO's) are also members of the "network secretariat" for the FNCSD.

Assessment:

The Finnish approach of a combination of lead and main responsibility by the PM, and a coordinating/driving-force role of the MinE is widely welcomed: the former, because it provides for political weight and impetus to SD policies, and the latter is not seen as problematic. However, a few Ministries supposedly "dislike" the MinE (lead). The coordination and cooperation between the Ministries is largely assessed positively. The Ministry of Finance is considered to be the most powerful Ministry, and may veto SD proposals from other Ministries, which has happened in many cases. So far, no approach for e.g. 'greening the budget' has taken place on the national level, but several Finnish cities have committed themselves to greening procurement (cf. ch. A.1.4). Also, mention is made of the Ministry of Trade and Industry as not yet being on track, and of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as having challenging tasks. Some problems in cooperation between Ministries supposedly derive from EU policies (e.g. Nitrates Directive, CAP).

The following are mentioned as weaknesses of the "network secretariat" mechanism:

- sometimes lack of continuity, when civil servants change posts or leave;
 - not all Ministries are fully involved, and in several cases it is difficult to get them committed: preparing the progress report for the WSSD created new awareness and the importance of full participation of Ministries received new impetus, which will be built upon in the future.
- Nevertheless, this shortcoming is a bit surprising, given the long history of cooperation between Ministries (as "network secretariat" and as members of the FNCSD), and the PM's leading position.

During the last three governments, environment and sustainable development have been relatively high on the political agenda, and were in this way included in all government programs. These have been so-called rainbow governments, with a coalition of parties from the political left and right, or

from the centre and from the Greens. Ministers are appointed on the basis of the share of a party in the coalition. It is stated that the MinE's relative strength has been stable. The main responsibility of the PM for SD has been in providing that all Ministries integrate environment and SD in their policies ("at least in theory").

It is difficult to assess the steering power of the PM: as in other countries, the PM cannot intervene in the day-to-day decision-making of Ministries; the PM's power was increased in general terms with a constitutional reform in 2000⁹; it remains to be seen how effective this will be in terms of involving those Ministries that are not yet fully committed to the environmental integration/SD agenda. So far it has been tackled with guidelines and programs developed by the FNCSD or its sub-committees. The motion currently under discussion of preparing a new SDS is regarded as an opportunity for new discussion on themes, sectors and Ministries, where a more active approach is needed.

1.3 MONITORING, REVIEWING AND LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

The SDS 1998 does not have an official 'term', but it states that the Finnish SD council shall prepare a review report as Finland's contribution to the WSSD, i.e. by 2002. All Ministries during this process reported on achievements and shortcomings of their activities towards SD. The final progress report was published in 2003. It evaluated progress made towards the objectives of the 1998 strategy (though not necessarily with indicators), and identified gaps in the priority fields (cf. ch. B).

The SD council was also asked to evaluate whether a full revision, i.e. a "new SDS", would be necessary; it responded in 2002/2003 negatively.

Meanwhile, though, given some international developments (like the Millennium goals, the Monterrey conference results and the Doha negotiation round) and shortcomings on targets and revision of priorities, the PM asked the secretariat of the FNCSD to prepare a discussion paper on the need for a new strategy, to be dealt with in Autumn 2004.

1.3.1 Indicators, targets and timetables

The SDS is intended to provide guidelines and a reference framework for other parties in promoting sustainable development. In the light of this, it has only qualitative, not quantitative targets. The general attitude towards targets so far has been reserved: they resemble a "grand plan", which is considered inappropriate for SD.¹⁰ Finland is committed to international objectives (Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), but at the same time there are specific difficulties, in particular those relating to the structure of Finnish industry (cf. ch. D.2): i.e. the country is only committed to the targets that are felt to be feasible. For a full revision of the SDS 2005, consideration is being given to also discussing quantitative targets.

⁹ Auffermann, 2003, p. 204.

¹⁰ Just as in Sweden there is a well-known anecdote from Russian politics: the target was to produce 2.000 tons of nails, with the result that 2 nails each weighing 1 ton were manufactured.

Finland has achieved a number of international targets in environmental policy:

- Sulphur (Oslo, 1994): reducing emissions by 80% from the 1980 level by 2000 (Finland's emissions in 2002 were 87% lower than 1980);
- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC, Geneva, 1991): there is a reduction target of -30% by 1999 compared to the level of 1988 (Finland's emissions were 2002 33% lower than 1998).

For renewable energy sources, Finland has an ambitious national target (which exceeds the EU target): to increase production by 30% by 2010, compared to the 2001 level. A "vision target" is to increase production by 60 – 70% by 2025 compared to the 2004 level.

On the proposal of a network of experts, a set of 83 indicators was adopted by the Finnish SD council in 2000, after discussion within the council and in seminars with a very broad stakeholder participation. During the 2002/2003 SDS evaluation, the indicators were revised by the "indicator network" and new ones were developed for the newly emerging priority fields. This indicator network of Ministry officials, research institutes and the Statistics Agency, led by the MinE, has since then further revised the set of indicators, with the results having been published in July 2004, and subsequently discussed in the SD council. This new set was modified to comprise fewer indicators (66), with more focus on the inter-linkages between the different dimensions of SD. They are grouped in eight themes that follow closely the EEA's GEAR approach¹¹.

The process of developing indicators was partly intended to become a vehicle for target- setting, which was largely unsuccessful. For the SDS 1998, they were not yet in place; for the sectoral strategies they were only partly linked to the quantitative targets which they contain. During the evaluation phase 2002/2003, the sectoral Ministries were asked to use them for measuring progress, but they only partly complied with this: for several Ministries, the use of indicators is not common, and not all are part of the indicator network.

Also for the overall progress report, the indicators were only partly linked to the objectives.

The intention is to achieve coherent policy coherence by linking key objectives and measures, though this does not really come within reach. Also, the importance of economic instruments and environmental impact assessment is emphasised.

1.3.2 Review terms, long-term perspective and role of the Parliament

The link between government and Parliament seems to be relatively strong, which is partly reflected in the above-mentioned 'night school', which more or less informally prepares cabinet meetings and includes leaders of the government parties.

¹¹ *Intergenerational equity, human health and well-being, distributional equity, adapting to the future, global responsibility, environmental pressure, preserving natural resources, eco-efficiency and community structure. The whole set of reclassified indicators can be found in English at: www.ymparisto.fi/default.asp?node=15131&lan=en.*

The parliamentary standing committees all have members from all parties, which may be a positive feature for the long-term orientation of policies. SD-related standing committees are the Environment Committee and the Committee for the Future, which, in cooperation with the Finnish SD council, together organised a seminar when the national partnership program was launched. They discuss SD policies, but the SDS 1998 was not officially discussed, because of its nature as a “decision-in-principle”, cf. ch. A.1.1). The Plenary also discusses SD policies, for example, last time in 2004 the national implications of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Regarding long-term goals, another stabilising factor is a predominantly consensus-oriented style of politics¹². Also international goals and commitments, such as the Millennium targets, are considered as stabilising the long-term track, in case there is a national commitment for them. This situation might also apply to EU targets. Nevertheless, there is almost no outstanding long-term (quantitative) objective in Finland, besides those international ones it is committed to (cf. ch. A.1.3.1).

The SDS itself does not have a fixed term (e.g. four years, as in other countries), though the target year for a review or progress report was already set in 1998 to be 2002. During the evaluation in 2002/2003, the decision was deliberately taken not to prepare a new strategy, as the strategic goals were considered as still being valid. This has meanwhile been reconsidered, and a full revision may be conducted in 2005.

The difference in the terms of government (4 years) and the FNCSD (5 years) is regarded as a mechanism, which provides for continuity. The 5-year mandate is intended to mirror the UN CSD. If a government changes, and hence the Ministers, the MinE asks all political parties to nominate their Ministers to the FNCSD, which leads to changes in composition because of certain sectors considered as important and other issues such as gender-balance. The terms of the work programmes for the FNCSD provide for continuity: e.g. the work programme 2003-2007 was prepared during the previous government. The mandate was hence already in place when the new government came into power, which then modified the programme.

The government that came in in 1995 and decided to prepare a SDS has since then continued in similar coalitions, at least with the same Prime Minister. This situation is considered as beneficial for the continuation of SD policies, but not as crucial, because of the aforementioned effects.

1.3.3 Approach for SD strategies

The Finnish approach for SD is clearly process-oriented (“SD is a very lengthy learning process”), and there is a very strong bottom-up attitude. Ownership and activities of societal groups are considered as more impor-

¹² *Though historically this was combined with a ‘government obeying’ – attitude, reflected in the originally strong position of the President when the country became independent in 1917, which was meant to enable the imposition of decisions ‘upon the people’. At the same time stakeholders and interest groups also have a long tradition, and new movements of civil society (nature, peace, women) have been strong: they have been included in policy-making based on the prevailing consensus culture and partly the need for broad societal consensus (mainly for foreign and security policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union) (Auffermann, 2003, p. 215, 211/212).*

tant than targets, though some actors mention target-setting as a challenge for the future, and also the government is currently considering whether a full revision/new SDS is needed to bring about improvements in this respect. With this so strongly bottom-up approach, it almost appears as if the strategic lines are weak, and coherence is lacking. There is the prevailing *belief* that in Finland everybody has “understood what SD is”, but when questioning strategic directions or details, the picture becomes rather opaque and contradictory. It is also stated that the SD strategy is not perceived as a ‘living document’ (some actors have even not seen it) and as generally not really important (which is again an indicator for the action-oriented approach).

The new National Committee on Sustainable Production and Consumption has now been asked to prepare a 10-year action plan for changing unsustainable consumption and production, which is meant to be more detailed and focused than the SDS.

Overall, the recent developments and deliberations show that Finland is starting to move slightly to the ‘planning’ side.

1.4 VERTICAL COORDINATION: LINK TO THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

The overall strong bottom-up approach and the underlying attitude that commitment and actions from all parties and sections of society are of paramount importance in Finland results in a situation where there is no vertical coordination as such. The national SDS does not serve as a role model for other SD strategies, as it is not considered important as a policy document, but as mutual learning process (cf. ch. A.2.2).

In line with an overall strong bottom-up approach, Local Agenda 21 has always been important in Finland. Currently, around 80% of the municipalities have started an LA 21 process. Finland together with Denmark has also promoted the development of LA 21 in the Baltic Sea region, and has initiated the “Baltic Local Agenda 21 Forum (BLA21F)”, a network of local level actors from several countries. There was previously a sub-committee for local sustainable development under the FNCS, but this is no longer the case, because the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities has taken over responsibility for LA21 processes, encouraged by the MinE.¹³ The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in 1997 adopted a SD strategy, i.e. even before the national strategy was endorsed. It calls upon municipalities to implement Local Agenda 21 processes, and offers to support these processes by facilitating the exchange of information and experience, providing training and cooperating in projects.¹⁴

The 5 (State) Provincial Offices are partly responsible for domains related to SD (e.g. social and health care, education, consumer affairs and food), but have not yet played an active role. There are 13 Regional Environmental Centres, under the jurisdiction of the MinE, which manage environmental protection, nature conservation, land use planning and water resources in

¹³ For example, it will organise a national seminar on Local sustainability “Who’s afraid of Sustainable Development?” 13.12.2004.

¹⁴ AFLRA, 1997, p. 7-9.

the regions, and which have tried to support the LA 21 processes. Other players at regional level are 20 Regional Councils, which operate as regional development and planning authorities (not part of the State administration), and 15 Employment and Economic Development Centres that provide advisory services for business. Neither has yet been involved in the SD agenda.

2 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

As already indicated above (ch. A.1.2, 1.3.2), self-organisation of society and stakeholder groups has a more than 100 year long tradition in Finland, originally based in the rural areas, inter alia in local communities, the church, farmers, classical non-governmental organisations for social matters (sports, education), consumer cooperatives and trade unions after industrialisation had started (relatively late).¹⁵ After the 2nd World War it has increasingly seen 'single-issue-movements', with, for example, an important peace movement, but also NGO's for nature protection and women's issues. NGO's have developed a continuous influence on political decision-making, and it has become more or less natural for the government to involve them, and it also financially supports them.¹⁶

The approach of Agenda 21 will have fallen on fertile ground and caused the early creation of the FNCSD (cf. ch. A.3 below). Also, other commissions established by government for certain issues typically include stakeholder groups¹⁷, which may almost be called a tradition.¹⁸

With this background, and in combination with the bottom-up approach taken for SD policies, the government in 1997, i.e. when preparing its own national strategy, asked stakeholders to develop their own SD strategies, which mainly happened and is regarded as successful. This was also promoted by and through the Finnish SD council.

Finland also started, already prior to the WSSD initiative, a national partnership program for SD, in order to "engage new stakeholders and develop new modes of action to promote SD in Finland"¹⁹. This program currently comprises 26 commitments made by different organisations (business enterprises, municipalities, NGO's, government, research institutes), which cooperate in the fields of sustainable production and consumption, procurement, energy savings and increased use of renewables, work safety in enterprises, housing, land use planning and transport. One example is that several Finnish municipalities (and partly the government, i.e. the MinE at least) have committed themselves to making their procurement policies more environmentally friendly, and a national green procurement network has been launched, following the example of the "Buy It Green" network run by ICLEI.

¹⁵ Historically this goes partly back to the time of Russian rule (1809 – 1917), when there was some autonomy, but no democratic representation.

¹⁶ Auffermann, 2003, p. 212.

¹⁷ The biggest Finnish environmental NGO, for example, (Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, 35.000 members) has 100 experts in governmental groups.

¹⁸ Some were mentioned during the survey phase, such as a new round table to prepare/advise on the National Strategy for Globalisation (composed of the Ministry of Trade, Finance and stakeholders), initiated by a trade union.

¹⁹ Ministry of Environment (no year), brochure.

2.1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Finnish industry has taken up the SD concept relatively early, mainly driven by an attitude of societal responsibility. As early as 1995 the Industry Federation issued a strategic policy called “Know-how partnership and eco-competitiveness”, which expressed its long-term vision. A recent review among companies revealed that environmental measures are predominantly not the trigger for economic success, but without improving environmental performance there would have been less profit. Market forces in general are seen as driving environmental measures, and individual countries aim at becoming or remaining frontrunners in order to achieve a competitiveness advantage.

The concept of CSR is considered as implementing SD at company level, with a focus on the social pillar, whereas SD in Finland used to have an emphasis on environmental sustainability. In 2001, an Ethical Forum was founded on the initiative of academia, which also covers SD issues.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

When preparing the 1998 SDS the inter-ministerial working group (cf. ch. A.1.2) considered it as most helpful to ask stakeholders to develop their own strategies, - in line with the underlying approach that creating ownership is the most important feature for SD. It was the FNCSD who asked the stakeholders (1996) to prepare their own strategies and at the same time the government started its own strategy process. Most of them honoured this request (the Farmers’ Union did not), and the stakeholders’ strategies were elaborated in a dialogue with the government strategy process, partly via the Finnish SD council. Nevertheless, the results were all quite different in nature, although stakeholder groups state that this dialogue process had an influence on their practices. The other way round the stakeholder strategies apparently had less impact on the government strategy.

The two-year evaluation process of 2002/2003 saw a comprehensive consultation of stakeholders via a sub-committee of the FNCSD (cf. ch. A.3.1), which better met the demands than the preparation phase.

Preparing a national set of indicators 1998-2000 was also a “massive” participatory process with the ‘network’ approach, led by the MinE (cf. ch. A.1.3.1 above).

Overall, because of the above-mentioned attitude to stakeholders, the groups felt adequately involved, and no criticism is raised about the process. With the bottom-up approach also reflected in the preparation of the SDS, it remains unclear how the stakeholder SD strategies and the government SDS are linked and/or have been mutually influential. It is, however, stressed that every stakeholder was committed to prepare his own strategy, and that the two processes were “in dialogue”. The 1998 SDS process seems to be more government-centred than the 2002 evaluation.

3 SD COUNCIL (FNCSO)

The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO) was set up in 1993 to promote cooperation between the government, the private sector, interest groups and NGO's, the scientific community, the education system and the media. In January 2003 the mandate was extended until the end of the year 2007.

The FNCSO has been chaired from the beginning by the Prime Minister, which is intended to give political weight, and has the Minister for Environment as vice-chair. Altogether it has 44 members: five other Ministers, as well as representatives from all other Ministries²⁰; 3 members of Parliament; non-government members include 5 business organisations, 4 trade unions, 1 representative from the local authorities' associations and 2 other regional/indigenous representatives, 8 NGO's (environment, development, consumer, youth). The number of non-governmental members was increased in 2003.

As introduced above, the Finnish SD council is mainly a platform for dialogue between government and non-government actors (a "discussion forum"), and not a think-tank for stakeholder deliberation and dialogue 'among each other'. However, the meetings are not considered as negotiations, but as an open forum for meaningful dialogue. This function as forum for "direct dialogue" and the opportunity for stakeholders to present ideas to the government is widely appreciated. The council meetings provide a contact point for all relevant actors in Finland, though discussion *among* stakeholders supposedly takes place in other fora. It is also stated that this largely applies to the classical stakeholder groups (industry and employers, trade unions, farmers), whereas environmental NGO's, for example, are relatively young and face some barriers regarding these traditional lines. From the viewpoint of 'classical' stakeholders, it was mentioned that the FNCSO is interesting for them, because of the direct link to the Prime Minister (even if they have heard about policies through other links).

This government – non-government dialogue function of the FNCSO is also reflected in the work style: It meets four times per year and the meeting lasts approximately two hours, whereas other SD councils meet more often and for longer, and dialogue with the government takes place in addition to the council's work. Other SD councils, though, do not necessarily have eight hours per year direct dialogue with the Prime Minister him/herself. The FNCSO does not issue recommendations or advice, and it acts neither on its own initiative nor at request of the government: this is simply incorporated.

The new National Committee on Sustainable Production and Consumption was deliberately set up separately from the FNCSO, because as a sub-committee of the FNCSO it would have lacked political weight. The main aspect reveals the difference between the functions: the FNCSO could not take the preparation of an action plan for sustainable production and consumption on board, as it is not a "planning/programming" body. It is now anticipated that there should be close cooperation between these two

20 depending on the topic to be discussed in a council meeting

bodies, which is already reflected in overlapping membership (half of its members are also members of the FNCSD).

3.1 ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SD COUNCIL

Role vis-à-vis the SDS:

The FNCSD did not give joint input to the “government program for SDS” in 1998 (the SD strategy), but individual organisations did via the dialogue process and by developing their own strategies. Most of the members of the inter-ministerial SDS group were also members of the FNCSD network secretariat. For the evaluation process of 2002/2003 it established a sub-committee for SD strategies, which had members from the relevant Ministries and those stakeholder groups that had developed their own SD strategies. The council also organised expert seminars in which the council members participated. The expert network for indicators was also involved. The FNCSD approved the work plan proposed in the progress report (cf. ch. B). In fact, it is the SD ‘council’ that publishes key documents on SD; it does not give ‘advice’.

General functions, - views are shared by the council and government:

- discussion forum between government and non-governmental actors: government hearing new ideas, and stakeholders being informed early about policies;
- a place for trying to find new partners and strengthen their commitment (e.g. LA 21 is important; new initiative: “national partnerships”);
- having a dialogue process is important; consensus building is not an explicit aim: agreements are mainly on what issues should be put on the agenda (and not on policy lines);
- stakeholder members take the results of discussion into their organisations, who then desirably take action;
- opinion building within government and stakeholders groups;
- promote SD within government, at local and regional level, and in society.

Functions of other SD councils (the independent think-tank type) do not apply. Agenda setting takes place to rather limited extent (e.g. sustainable consumption and production); as the council is not meant to be an independent body, raising awareness for certain issues might evolve in dialogue between the secretariat and stakeholder, and might be put on the agenda by the secretariat. Conflicting issues – both among stakeholders and between stakeholders and government – are not explicitly tackled.

Stakeholder members of the council nevertheless are very satisfied with the council, the fact that they are members has changed the thinking and practice in their respective organisations; getting first hand information and having the chance to address the (Prime) Minister(s) directly is seen as very valuable.

3.2 INTERNAL ASPECTS OF OPERATION

Council members operate on equal footing:

This aspect does not apply because of the polar situation of government – non-government. As the SD council itself does not aim at getting agreements among stakeholders, the aspect of ‘double-hat’ of council members also does not play a role: the council ‘members’ just represent their organisation’s view in the council meetings.

Relation to and role of socio-economic partners:

There is no separate, institutionalised socio-economic partnership. As mentioned above, the classical stakeholders groups (industry and employers, trade unions, farmers) are considered as having better lines into government than ‘younger’ NGO’s. For the SD ‘council’ it is not an issue, as it is a platform for – almost bilateral – dialogue between individual NGO’s (‘old’ and ‘new’) and the government.

Relation to government departments:

As the SD council itself is the platform for dialogue with government, this issue does not play a role. It is stated that the council softens the Finnish governing style somewhat, which is traditionally very formal.²¹ The potential of other councils to approach government (departments) with challenging agreements among stakeholders cannot be brought to bear in this setting.

3.3 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COUNCIL

1 Government’s view

- Providing for continuity: SD has stayed on the political agenda for a long time, over 3 different governments;
- getting ideas and input from stakeholders;
- finding new partnerships and strengthening the commitment of stakeholders.

2 SDC’s view

- keeping SD on the agenda and providing for continuity (each new government did discuss the usefulness of the council, and each time it was re-established);
- promoting SD in the society, and supporting new initiatives (e.g. the national partnership program);
- being able to take up difficult political issues and especially long-term SD themes (e.g. long-term objectives for climate policy, ecological tax-reform).

During the evaluation of the SD strategy in 2002/2003 there was some reflection on the FNCSD, and it was mainly asked to strengthen the secretariat, and to concentrate on sustainable production and consumption, which was then approached with the establishment of a new commission. Some (minor) changes in working style and composition were undertaken: one

²¹ The previous PM was described as rigid and “almost frightening”.

decision was to follow the example of the UN CSD and concentrate on one topic per council meeting. There are currently no working groups within the council; former groups existed for local policies, consumption and trade, education, the latter sub-committee was recently re-established with the special responsibility for the UN Decade on Education for SD. The outcomes of the working groups typically consist of engaging new actors to work for SD.

No explicit challenges for the SD council were mentioned.

Success factors of a SD council

As the Finnish model for a SD council differs considerably from SD councils in other countries, also the success factors are different, with the main overlap to many countries, that the lead of the PM (here: the chairmanship) is considered to be a very important signal that SD is high on the political agenda. The council itself hence provides the link into government, which is mentioned in other countries as important. Other factors that are related to the think-tank functions of other SD councils do not apply in the Finnish case.

B Themes and scope

Finland emphasised ecological sustainability in the earlier years (reports 1990 and 1995), and also the 1998 SD strategy “is designed to promote ecological sustainability and the economic and social and cultural preconditions for achieving this end”. It defines the strategic objectives and lines of action for key priority fields:

- Finland’s role in international co-operation,
- Products, production and consumption,
- Energy economy,
- Regional structure, urban structure and transport,
- Rural areas and use of renewable resources,
- Research and education.

The progress report 2002/2003 included a revision of the priority areas, based on increased understanding of SD, identified gaps and finally proposed to cover the three dimensions of SD with the following priority areas:

- 1 Employment, Production, Competitiveness,
- 2 Environmental Pollution – conservation and use of natural resources,
- 3 Regional and community structure – transport and mobility,
- 4 Health and security – full citizenship,
- 5 Joint responsibility and corporate social responsibility,
- 6 Innovation and education.

Qualitative objectives are grouped around the three dimensions and include:
Social objectives

- Promote active work and gender equality, and fight contagious diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis;
- Prevent health problems due to lifestyle choices (drugs, smoking, unhealthy eating habits, mental health problems and limited mobility);
- Increase the number of active years citizens live;
- Extensive social security for all citizens;
- Prevention of poverty, social exclusion, and vulnerability. Avoid crime and feelings of insecurity;
- Better guarantee the rights of women, children, and indigenous people;
- Continuously reform values and attitudes to create a good basis for a balanced sustainable development (which refers to an overall discussion about balancing the three ‘pillars’, cf. below).

Economic Objectives

- Revise taxation and public spending (use of eco-taxes is increased, but ecological tax-reform is still to come);
- Safeguard high employment;
- Encourage business and industry to integrate social and ecological considerations in cooperation with various stakeholders;

- More competitive regional developments and strengthening of ‘know-how’ to be transferred to developing countries;
- Increase eco-efficiency (e.g. through life cycle assessments, monitoring of materials flow);
- Increase curricula of institutions to consider social and economic dimensions of sustainable development;
- Greater citizen commitment and encouragement of cooperation and dialogue between administrative sectors (which is meant to be seen in the light of changing consumption patterns).

Environmental Objectives

Finland is well established among the leading countries as far as the development of economic instruments for environmental protection is concerned. Sectoral objectives include:

Transport & Communications:

- Capacity to prevent oil spills should also be improved and a traffic guidance system set up in the Gulf of Finland. In cooperation with the European Union and the CEMT (European Conference of Ministers of Transport), environmental activities in Russia should be enhanced;
- Internalise the costs of communication and transport into fees for public services;
- Full utilisation of electronic services to curb unnecessary transports.

Water:

Full implementation of the National Water Protection Programme by 2005 so that phosphorous and nitrogen discharges are reduced by 50% between the years 1994 and 2005 (NB: this is a repetition of a sectoral program).

Agriculture:

- Curb the use of fertilisers and chemical pesticides;
- Large scale change-over to organic production and introduction of biological pest control.

Forestry:

- Efficient protection of forests and further sustainable forestry development supported through co-operation;
- Urgent need to step up international measures to combat illegal trade in timber and illegal logging.

In addition to these objectives, a set of indicators was subsequently developed (cf. ch. A.1.3.1), grouped by the following sub-themes, with each having 3-4 indicators:

- 6 environmental (climate change, ozone layer depletion, acidification, eutrophication, biodiversity, toxic contamination): 21 indicators;
- 5 economic (economic development, environmental policy instruments, natural resources, community structure and transport, demographic developments): 29 indicators;
- 9 socio-cultural (lifestyle and illness, the workforce, social problems and

equity issues, education research and participation, access to information, cultural heritage, ethnic minorities, development co-operation and production and consumption): 33 indicators.

51 of these 83 indicators are also used by other countries. A revised set of 66 was published in July 2004, now grouped in eight thematic categories (cf. ch. A.1.3.1).

Other priority fields are reflected in the work plan of the FNCSD for 2003 – 2007, which was proposed in the progress report:

- trade, development and poverty (October 2003),
- long-term goals of climate change policy (January 2004),
- sustainable transport and mobility (March 2004),
- corporate social responsibility and sustainable consumption (May 2004),
- a sustainable economy (Autumn 2004),
- regional cooperation around the Baltic Sea, the Northern dimension and Arctic cooperation (Autumn 2004),
- biodiversity (Spring 2005),
- sustainable regional development (Autumn 2005),
- assessment of impacts on human welfare (Spring 2006).

Overall it is stated that though the (three) dimensions have not yet been successfully integrated, and hence the SDS is still quite strong on environmental integration, the underlying paradigm of the Nordic Welfare State, with universal security systems which aim to guarantee that each citizen has the basic preconditions to actively participate in social and political decision-making and planning etc., is a basic political approach to SD, and explains the objectives in the social dimension.

There is apparently also an ongoing debate about balancing the three dimensions, in which the environmental dimension is often considered as too strong, but if and when SD is taken seriously such debates are considered as natural.

C Relation to the EU (SDS) and other international strategies

1 CONSIDERATION AND IMPACT OF EU-SDS

Finland's early commitment to SD policies was triggered by the Rio conference, which led as first action to the establishment of the SD council. The EU SDS was only endorsed much later than the Finnish SD strategy, but was also not considered in the evaluation report 2002/2003.

Finland plays a very active role in the three multi-national SD strategies: the Baltic, Nordic and Arctic²², and these strategies are coordinated with national policies. After its accession to the EU Finland also initiated the "Northern Dimension", which seeks to address the external and cross-boarder policies of the EU and the (then) non-EU member states. After accession of the CEE countries (Baltic States and Poland) the main external partners are Russia, Norway and Iceland, and the USA and Canada are observers. The main focus of the Northern dimension is on promoting the relationship between the EU and North-West Russia. The first Northern Dimension Action Plan was approved in 2000, and the second for the period of 2004-2006. The main goals are to reduce polluting emissions, to develop environmental legislation and administration, to promote environmental integration and economic co-operation, with maritime safety as a particular focus. Co-operation within the framework of this Action Plan is carried out between the EU Commission, the EU member states, the non-EU partners, observer countries and several regional organisations (e.g. the Nordic and Baltic Councils of Ministers), international financial institutions and NGO's. There is no direct relation between the regional SD strategies and the ND Action Plan, because the actors and their interests vary from process to process. Those countries participating in all processes, which includes Finland and Sweden, have tried to seek coherence in the four strategies/plans and their implementation.

Finland's self-perception as successful frontrunner in environmental and SD policies causes a certain lack of attention towards the EU SDS: it should rather be the other way round - the EU could learn from Finland. The general assessment is that having an EU SDS is very important for an enlarged Europe since the EU SDS will be ambitious for the new member states (i.e. not for Finland because of its frontrunner position, although some problems of course exist, cf. below). Environmental legislation is taken seriously, and Finland is an active player in this field. This might partly go back to the then astonishing experience that the country had to do some homework on environmental policy for EU accession, which it had not expected at all. The generally somewhat reserved attitude towards Europe is similar to that in other Scandinavian countries, and is reflected in the relatively late acces-

22 "An Agenda for the Baltic Sea Region – Baltic 21" (1998); "Sustainable Development – Bearings for the Nordic Countries" (2001); "Arctic Sustainable Development Action Program", approved by the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting on 24.11.2004. The regional differences also imply a number of non-EU member states as members or partners: the Nordic Council has Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the Aland and Faroe Islands as non-EU members, the Arctic Council has USA, Canada and Russia as members, and the Baltic 21 also has Russia as a member.

sion (1995). The subsidiarity principle is emphasised, and the EU is asked to restrict itself to benchmarking. The Union is considered to have an important role in “strengthening the shoulders of a small country”, with particular respect to security policies, which for Finland are vital in view of the country’s relationship with Russia, and it asks the EU to help in negotiations with Russia. The economic benefits are also appreciated.

As observed in almost all other countries, it is also stated in Finland, that “EU lives its own life, also within its administration” and hence is far away. The Lisbon process does not play a role as such, as Finland is one of the very few countries to take significant measures towards the Lisbon objectives, within its own capabilities, and was assessed as being on track at the Spring Summit 2004²³. Also this position contributes to the attitude that Finland has done its share, and now the others should follow.²⁴

For a possible full revision of the SDS it is planned to put both the EU SDS and the WSSD outcomes on the agenda. Also, the forthcoming Finnish EU Presidency (second term 2006) is already causing greater attention, and deliberations on priority setting have started.

2 SD COUNCIL (FNCSO): EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Besides promoting SD in Finland the FNCSO has the task of preparing Finland’s positions and national reports to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and coordinating other international cooperation in the field of sustainable development, in particular the Agenda 21 commitments. This is done through the ‘network secretariat’, and the SD council itself has special meetings on international SD meetings.

The council’s non-government members were part of the government delegation of the WSSD. There was a special preparatory committee for the WSSD, whose members were also members of the FNCSO or represented those stakeholder organisations represented in the SD council. The committee organised special seminars before the WSSD on the relevant themes.

Regarding European policy some of its members are also members of a Forum for EU affairs, in which government and stakeholders participate. The council considered the EU SDS during the process of its preparation, but did not include it in deliberations of the national SDS. The discussions were rather informal and of an informative nature.

It is currently planned to consider the consultation process of the EU SDS review.

3 LISBON PROCESS: PREPARATION OF SPRING SUMMITS

The PM’s office has a secretariat for EU affairs, which prepares the Spring Summits in consultation with ministerial sub-committees, incl. the sub-committee for environment and SD, all of which also include representatives of the four governing parties. The Forum for EU affairs is also consulted. The Finnish position for each European Council of Ministers meeting has to

²³ NB: together with Ireland.

²⁴ Some state that what Finland has left to be done is “rather marginal (small country, few people)”.

be approved by the 'grand committee' of Parliament. As the name suggests, this is the largest standing committee of Parliament, which serves as a kind of second chamber, and has taken EU affairs on board after the accession of Finland in 1995. It also has the EU SDS on the agenda, though not necessarily explicitly when preparing the Spring Summits.

4 POLICY FIELDS UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM

Upstream action - EU activity is desired/required

- biodiversity;
- environmental taxation: Finland's environmental taxes are mostly related to energy (e.g. electricity, including for industrial purposes) and it introduced a CO₂-tax already in 1990. EU taxation is desired for reasons of competitiveness;
- R&D: follow the good example of Finland, spend more (e.g. for biofuels), instead of CAP;
- maritime safety for the Baltic Sea (particularly regarding transport of oil and chemicals from Russia);
- further improvement of CAP;
- spend more on railways and sea-waterways (ice-breaking);
- climate change: the EU is responsible because of the liberalised energy market, and only the EU is large enough to influence international markets.

The overall importance of the Baltic region and the situation of being a neighbouring country to Russia led to the request that HELCOM should become binding and should include negotiations between the EU and Russia. The '(EU) Northern Dimension Action Plan' should further develop its SD dimension and include all Northern European countries. There should be a focus on better coordination and streamlining with the regional SD strategies (Nordic/Baltic/Arctic). In general, the EU should take the Northern Dimension more seriously.

In the course of the preparation for the EU Presidency (2006) the FNCSO will deliberate on EU policies important for SD.

Downstream impact - EU policies hampering national SD processes

Besides the discussion on the Kyoto protocol and the EU burden sharing agreements (cf. ch. D.2), no particular policy was mentioned. The free movement of goods is considered as problematic because of increasing transport volumes.

Overall assessment

The level of desired upstream actions is relatively low, and reflects the rather reserved attitude towards the EU. The attitude to targets set at EU level to an extent reveals the tragedy of the frontrunner: EU targets were only partly appreciated, mostly considered as insignificant (when Finland was already exceeding these targets), and sometimes they cause an outcry, namely when

the country has difficulties meeting them. Being used to ranking very high makes it hard to imagine that targets cannot be met. Then something must be unfair. There are also reservations about EU targets, because “targets need to be developed bottom-up, not top-down” (cf. overall bottom-up approach).

Finland has started to deliberate on the priorities for its EU Presidency (second term 2006), which will be likely to include the country’s priorities of eco-efficiency and material efficiency as well as sustainable production and consumption.

D Achievements and shortcomings in the national SD agenda

1 SUCCESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS

Again in line with the bottom-up approach, most success stories are found at the local level and are based on local initiatives (e.g. public procurement, “near-food” programs in schools).

National success both in social and environmental policies is not attributed to SD policies, and surely not to the SDS, but to earlier developments: policies bringing about the Nordic welfare state, and societal awareness of environmental problems that had already started in the 1980’s: a lot of measures, e.g. expensive investment in waste water treatment, was triggered by societal demand. Also, business realised that environmental measures are profitable. Hence the SD strategy is rather an overarching document of ongoing policies, and some new priorities (e.g. decoupling).

It is somehow a success of the SD agenda in itself that the topic has ‘survived’ over a very long time and is kept on the agenda; the ownership approach has been very successful, too: Even if the content at times seems to fall short a bit, and conflicting issues seem not to be put on the table, SD policies are a self-evident part of Finnish policies.

The structure of Finnish industry with its large share of the paper and pulp and basic metals industry, is characterised as very energy and material intensive. It has, however, made much progress in terms of eco-efficiency, as a result of environmental regulation, R&D programs and initiatives by the industry branches themselves, which is altogether clearly a success. The overall problems of unsustainable trends in consumption and production are since recently being tackled by a new national committee of government and stakeholders. Also, a further success is the high share in renewable energy production, which is mainly based on biomass. This technology, in which Finland has a leading position, has made the pulp-industry self-sufficient for energy.

Shortcomings:

So far a lack of target setting: if there are any quantitative targets, they are set in sectoral strategies, and for this reason the overarching view is missing. Consideration is being given to improving this with a revision of the SDS.

2 MOST DIFFICULT POLICY FIELDS

Mostly mentioned are:

- Climate change / energy, partly transport,
- Planning and housing,
- Waste,
- Maintaining the Nordic welfare state with an ageing population.

The overall objective for decoupling was only taken up triggered by the WSSD. Industry has a good record in terms of eco-efficiency, but the total

energy and natural resources consumption is increasing, which causes problems: i.e. consumption patterns become more unsustainable, but society with respect to other countries tends to ask that others should now follow Finland's good example.

Overall, increasing eco-efficiency is a central objective (though somewhat hidden in the priority fields, cf. ch. B), and climate change plays a key role in this approach. There is a ministerial steering group for climate change policy, led by the Ministry for Trade and Industry. The MinE nevertheless leads the Finnish delegation in international climate change negotiations, because of its responsibility for the Rio commitments – like the UN Framework Convention on CC. Both ministerial groups are basically composed of officials from the same units, negotiating national positions. The government will report to Parliament on its climate change policies by the end of 2004.

Climate change/energy

Energy intensity was tackled in the past with environmental regulation. Basic production is still material and energy intensive, but on average strong progress has been made in eco-efficiency ; the paper and pulp industry is mentioned as a particularly successful example.

However, the Kyoto targets and burden sharing agreements are the issues currently most criticised in Finland by industry and trade unions. Industry feels it is being treated “unfairly”, because it has already taken such extensive measures, which now leads to the country having one of the highest costs for further CO₂-reduction measures, even if the burden sharing agreement has only a 0% target for Finland. Also, the reference year of 1990 is criticised.²⁵ Finnish industry is very energy intensive, and some sectors cannot further cut CO₂ emissions, because coal is used in the production process not as an energy source (basic metals industry). The service sector industry fears that the EU is losing competitiveness compared to the USA. The energy-producing sector is worried about criticism of other EU countries for the use of peat, which is a non-renewable and also polluting energy source. But for rural economies in Finland this 6% use of peat is important. Finland also voted against an EU target for the post-Kyoto period, because of the opinion that it first needs to come into force with particularly Russia ratifying, others joining (USA and developing countries) and because of feared competitiveness disadvantages.

Also in housing more measures for energy saving, and more energy efficient installations (CHP is mentioned) need to be introduced; partly this is a problem of infrastructure (one gas pipeline is missing), and partly of investments: There is a program for energy savings and a national energy program, both of which were renewed in 2001, in order to be compatible with the national climate strategy from 2001.

The EU target for renewables is already exceeded by Finland, with the main source being biomass (cf. above).

²⁵ At that time there was a bad recession, because of the collapse of exports to the Soviet Union, and hence production was very low.

In 2002 Parliament responded positively to an application by the government to build one more nuclear power plant. The share of nuclear power is 17% of total energy consumption.

Transport

Transport is also an increasing contributor to CO₂-emissions, but is difficult to tackle because of the geographical situation of being sparsely populated. Interestingly, this argument is also used for in a way ‘excusing’ Finland: as it will have one of the lowest car densities per km², this “cannot be so harmful when compared internationally”. It is stated that the rail system needs to be improved.

For the areas of **waste** and **housing** no particular reasons are given why they are difficult fields. They have been tackled with a national waste management plan (recently updated), and a new strategy for planning and housing with an overall goal for SD.

3 IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS FOR THE NATIONAL SDS

Content: agree on (quantitative) targets, better link objectives, targets and indicators.

Procedural: improve coherence of numerous strategies in place.

With the action-oriented attitude Finland does not emphasise improving the strategy, but stresses the need for education at all levels, exchange of best practice and strengthening the knowledge base. It is, however, apparently not considered important to define in a strategy, what sustainable means or should mean, and which actions are best practice.

4 NATIONAL SDS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Achievements and challenges are assessed in a summarised way as follows²⁶:

- + Strong background in environmental sustainability: ranking top of the Environmental Sustainability Index (2002);
- + PM chairing the SD council gives political weight; continuity has been achieved;
- +/(◆) Strong bottom-up approach: broad stakeholder commitment; though conflicts are not explicitly addressed; most success stories are found at the local level;
- +/◆ Good cooperation of government departments; but getting all departments concerned committed remains a challenge;
- +/◆ Links and coherence of all strategies and programmes in place seem deficient;
- (+)/◆ Set of indicators in place, though no clear link to objectives of the SD strategy, which also lacks quantitative targets (envisioned now for 2005).

²⁶ + achievement
 (+) partial achievement
 +/◆ mixed: achievement and challenge
 (◆) partial challenge
 ◆ challenge

E Recommendations for the EU SDS review

Government

- Make the EU SDS and the Lisbon strategy coherent (architecture);
- Ensure that the relation of the EU SDS to the regional strategies (Nordic, Arctic, Baltic) is coherent;
- The Cardiff process has been at a standstill for a while: it should be revitalised.
- The EU-SDS should also have sustainable consumption and production patterns as a spearhead.

SDC/stakeholders

- EU SDS is remote from people: improve communication and clarify the architecture of EU SDS and Lisbon process;
- strengthen the environmental dimension of the Lisbon strategy.

As Finland itself has the aim of becoming an eco-efficient economy, it would welcome including this in the Lisbon goals, as well as “changing the unsustainable consumption and production patterns”.

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Colophon

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