

EEAC series
Background study no. 2 (2005)

Sustaining Sustainability

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



EEAC
the network of
European Environment and
Sustainable Development
Advisory Councils

Ingeborg Niestroy
commissioned by the EEAC Working Group Sustainable Development
January 2005

3 Germany

COMMITMENT OF THE PM (CHANCELLOR), WELL FUNCTIONING SD COUNCIL SUCCEEDS IN AWARENESS RAISING, COMPREHENSIVE SDS WITH OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

- Commitment for preparing a SDS with a new government in 1998 with the lead responsibility in the chancellery (PM office); establishment of a 'green cabinet' and a SD council in 2000.
- SDS is comprehensive with partly quantitative objectives and timetables, including some prominent ones, and 21 headline indicators; SD is supported as leitmotif for the 21st century: the link to the overall government policy ("Agenda 2010") needs to be improved.
- Reactive attitude towards European policies, which tend to play a role only in the legal sphere; the EU SDS was hardly considered; the SDC and some NGOs are trying to improve this; new developments recently.
- Though no real tradition in stakeholder consultation, it has started to be taken seriously; consultation is done in a regular procedure.
- Vertical links have not been the focus yet, and hence are still poor; bottom-up initiatives take place (some Laender, and rather many LA 21 processes).
- The SD council receives a lot of credit.



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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>PM</i>	<i>Prime Minister (the position of Head of Government is called chancellor, in German "Bundeskanzler")</i>
<i>PM Office</i>	<i>Chancellery (in German "Bundeskanzleramt")</i>
<i>MinE</i>	<i>In Germany it is the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety ("BMU")</i>

A Actors and Process

1 GOVERNMENT: SDS PROCESS, GOVERNMENT COORDINATION AND REVIEW

1.1 SD STRATEGIES' DEVELOPMENT

Previous phase

- 1993 Post-Rio: Establishment of the 'Scientific council for global change (WBGU)'
- 1996 Steps towards a sustainable development ("Schritte zu einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung": Policy paper by the Federal Ministry for Environment)
- 1997 Report of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA): "Sustainable Germany – towards an environmentally sound development"
- 1998 Final Report of the Enquete-Commission "Protection of man and the environment": Concept for sustainability: from model to implementation

Oct. 1998 New government

Current phase

- Oct. 1998 Coalition agreement: decision to elaborate a SD strategy by mid 2002, which should include objectives
- July 2000 Cabinet decision to elaborate the SD strategy, to establish a 'green cabinet' and a SD council
- April 2001 Establishment of the SD council (RNE)
- Oct. 2001 Government consultation paper for a SDS: Internet consultation
- Jan. 2002 Consultation of the draft SDS
- April 2002 Cabinet approves the SDS "Perspectives for Germany: Our strategy for sustainable development"
- March 2004 Establishment of a Parliamentary Commission for SD
- Jan. 2004 Government installs a "dialogue"-website (www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de). Government consultation paper for the progress report on SD policies, to be finalised in autumn 2004: first consultation phase Jan/Febr.
- April 2004 First draft progress report
- April-June 04 Consultation on progress report
- Nov. 2004 Adoption of the progress report by the cabinet and publication

Assessment:

Germany has been one of the frontrunners in environmental protection policies since – or during - the 1970s.¹ Some efforts for environmental integration, including institutional experiments, also took place during the 1970s, but were not further followed by the subsequent governments.

¹ In institutional terms this was reflected e.g. in the early establishment of an environmental advisory council (SRU), as did Sweden and UK. A separate Environment Ministry though was only installed in 1986 (in light of the nuclear accident of Tschernobyl, hence responsibility for nuclear safety was allocated to this Ministry).

The concept of sustainable development was dealt with relatively late: The Rio conference only led to the establishment of the Scientific advisory council for global change (WBGU); particularly the work of two Enquete-commissions installed by Parliament triggered a new round of thinking, and led to a Parliament decision in 1998 that asked the government to elaborate a SD strategy and to establish a SD council. It could be of relevance for the long-term perspective that this decision was taken by the then majority of Christian-democrats and Liberals. In the same year a new government came in, with the Green Party for the first time in a federal coalition government (with the Social-democratic Party), transposed this decision into its coalition agreement, adding that the SD strategy should have concrete objectives and be prepared by 2002.² Only two years later, in 2000, the government decided on an institutional framework with

- a a State Secretary Committee for Sustainable Development ('green cabinet'), with the PM office (chancellery) chairing, and
- b a SD council as advisor to the government for sustainable development policies, and for preparing contributions to the SD strategy.

It took a while until the council was established, and more than one year until the government presented its first consultation paper for the SDS. The consultation itself and the time left for revising and finalization was hence relatively short. The SDS 2002 – 2006 was endorsed by the government on the eve of the next election (October 2002). What would have happened with a new government can only be speculated (cf. ch. A.1.3.2).

The SDS 2002 – 2006 is mainly assessed as a positive achievement, with some criticism on targets not being ambitious enough (but positive: that there are targets at all), some policies staying too vague, some objectives and indicators such as GDP being not related to sustainability and overall that measures are not explicit enough or are missing. Overall there is not much discussion on the deficiencies of the SDS, as the current reporting phase is rather perceived as a reviewing phase, in which improvements are aimed at.

It is regretted that Germany had not already put SD on the agenda for its EU Presidency in 1999. This was for basically the same reason as the delay before starting to work on the SDS (almost three years): domestic problems were considered as too urgent.

Overall the work on the SDS, including its implementation and monitoring of progress, despite some delay, has been taken seriously during the last three years in Germany. Particularly the lead responsibility of the chancellery has been a key success factor (cf. next ch. 1.2), and the SD council contributed significantly to progress and visibility (cf. ch. A.3). But it is said that government and the chancellor could increase this by putting other overarching political programs (particularly the so-called "Agenda 2010") in the context of SD. Progress in sectoral policy fields, which only partly go back to the SDS itself, will remain an ongoing challenge.

The establishment of a new Committee for SD in Parliament as an overarch-

² Coalition agreement of the German Social-democratic Party and the Green Party, 20.10.1998, p.17.

ing mechanism seems useful in principle.³ It remains to be seen how it will manage to increase the cross-sectoral dimension of the standing committees and raise awareness of the issue among MPs, and whether it will become a driving-force and possibly improve the long-term perspective.

1.2 LEAD RESPONSIBILITY AND HORIZONTAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The cabinet decision of 2000 included that the chancellery chairs the State Secretary Committee for Sustainable Development ('green cabinet'), and is overall responsible for the SDS, by coordinating and steering. Initiators for this approach were two MPs from the two coalition parties, supported by the former 'State Minister' in the chancellery⁴, who regarded SD as being also a field for personal engagement.

The governmental/administrative structure in Germany is not favourable for comprehensive approaches, as the Ministers have a relatively strong position with leading their Ministry independently and in own responsibility.⁵

However, this independence is embedded in the overall so-called 'guidance competence' of the chancellor, which has to be respected. The chancellor himself hence has a strong position, which is balanced by the independence of the Ministers (up to certain limits), and the practice of collective cabinet decisions. Overall, policy-making in Germany is more characterised by conflicts between Ministries, which is also fed by the traditional coalition governments with Ministers from different political parties.

These factors led to the decision to give the overall lead for the SD-process to the chancellery; this also means that the SDS falls under the 'guidance competence' of the chancellor, which e.g. comprises decisions on priorities and objectives. This mechanism is – now ex-post - considered as a key success factor for the SDS. It prevented classical conflicts between Ministries, eventually leading to stalemate, and provided that quantitative objectives have been maintained: there were attempts by some Ministers to give up certain targets for the sake of individual success. The chancellery has not only a coordination role, but is also steering the process and by this giving input and impulses to the relevant Ministries. For instance, in elaborating the SDS the individual Ministries drafted parts, which were reviewed by the chancellery in light of a comprehensive approach (and e.g. input by the SD council), given back for re-draft, and all contributions put together as the final SDS by the chancellery. Political leadership for the SDS falls under the 'guidance competence' of the chancellery, and its administrative implementation takes place in a link between the chancellery and the respective Ministries responsible for the specific issues. In 2004 the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) responded to this political scheme by establishing a Committee for SD in the

3 Germany is currently the only country among the 9 explored in this study with such a specific Committee (besides Sweden with its comitology system in general, and the UK with an environmental audit committee that also deals with SD. Ireland used to have a Committee for SD, but this was "re-sectoralized" following the lead responsibility of MinE for SD).

4 The position of "State Minister" is at the Minister level, but without a Ministry. The State Minister in the chancellery has a special assistance and leadership function.

5 This constitutional provision is meant to prevent a chancellor from being able to govern a Ministry sidelining the Minister (Ismayr, 2003, p.459).

Parliament (cf. also ch. A.1.3.2): Policy issues prepared by a Ministry are typically dealt with in the respective standing committee of the Parliament but there used to be no parliamentary framework to respond to political initiatives taken by the green cabinet. Members of Parliament found themselves discussing elements of SD policies in the standing committees, but they perceived themselves to be cut out of the political debate on the policy frame of SD. In the upcoming debates on the SD Strategy and on SD issues the Parliamentary Committee will have to develop the status of relations to the Standing Committees and to the Federal Government.

A substantive reason for the overall lead of the chancellery in the SD-process was the intention not to deal with SD as environment policy ‘in another garment’, which would have caused ‘critical reflexes’ in other departments. The MinE at the same time welcomed the integrated approach; it saw that a setting with all fields being equal has the potential that the originally weaker ones gain, and evaluates ex-post that environment has profited from the arrangement, not only through being considered in all matters. It is also stated that the MinE learned to approach themes from a different angle, too. Independently of these aspects the MinE does retain an important function as a pacemaker for the wider SD policies.

The ‘green cabinet’ comprises nine State Secretaries⁶ from the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Labour, Social Affairs and Health, Environment, Consumer Protection and Agriculture, Transport, Development Aid, Foreign Affairs, Education and Research, and Finance. Supposedly, at least in the beginning, some Ministries cooperated only because they would otherwise have lost influence. The chancellery also serves as secretariat for this State Secretary Committee, whose meetings are prepared by a working group of strategy sub-Directors of the Ministries involved. This working group is also assessed as having very positive effects for mutual understanding. As a second tier challenge regarding integration it is realised that insights of this working group also need to be communicated further into the individual Ministries (i.e. to the “specialists”).

For the individual priority fields of the strategy, the concerned Ministry has the lead responsibility for implementation. Thus, the Ministries for Environment, Economy, Social Affairs, Housing, Transport, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Development Aid etc. have different tasks but a joint responsibility. This implies that they have to settle diverging objectives and policies within the green cabinet, which, for obvious reasons, is sometimes not at all easy, as SD policy is in general.

Assessment:

The lead responsibility of the chancellery is overwhelmingly assessed positively. As a success factor it is stated that personal commitment in the chancellery is a prerequisite. The typical arguments against such a mechanism are denied:

⁶ *State Secretaries in Germany are the administrative head of a Ministry, positions which are often, but not necessarily, filled-in by political colour. As opposed to the Junior Ministers in UK (Ministers outside the cabinet), and the ‘State Secretaries’ in NL (who are in fact Junior Ministers), they are not elected.*

- a environment gets weaker: the MinE states that it would have got less far with many matters if it had had the lead;
- b in the case of a change of government, with a less committed one coming in, SD is more endangered than with a MinE lead: it is considered that it doesn't matter where the lead previously was located, if there is the intention to down-grade the subject.

1.3 MONITORING, REGULAR REVIEWING AND LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

The SDS has a four-year term and the government approved that every two years a progress report should be prepared, which monitors progress against the objectives (and the indicators, which are mainly trend objectives). A revision of the indicators (and objectives) is planned for 2006.

In contrast to this intention, the consultation paper for the progress report 2004 represents a revision of the priority fields, whereas only the progress/monitoring report (mid-term review) will contain a systematic review of progress made by measuring the indicators. A draft of this report was published in April 2004 and was under public consultation until summer. This approach is not entirely logical, as to a large extent an insight into progress made in the ongoing priority fields provides the basis for a decision about their future. The approach in Germany may partly be interpreted as mainly politically driven, i.e. new themes (maybe more attractive, because new) are set without scrutinising the past.

The 2002 strategy contains seven priority fields, three of which are prioritised for the first two years (cf. ch. B: energy, food quality/agriculture/health, mobility), plus one overarching one. The consultation paper 2004 selects two of the remaining four (i.e. drops the other two), and adds two new ones, which can mainly be seen as underpinning ones for energy policy. The government argues that one of them (alternative fuels) requires urgent action, because so far activities are scattered across the Ministries and need to be brought together. It is also stated that the 'old' themes will be continued, though only the mid-term review will reveal the progress made so far and the planned measures for the future. Altogether the approach for the priority fields is a bit opaque, and measuring progress does not seem to be in the focus, or least not done in a systematic order.

1.3.1 Indicators, targets and timetables

The German SDS contains strategic, and mostly quantitative, objectives and uses indicators. Such an approach had been one of the key recommendations of the SD council, though disputed within government: The approach had the connotation of dirigisme and socialist 'planning economy'.⁷ Another reservation derived from the fact that an existing, politically important, objective (reducing the number of unemployed) had just failed. Finally the decision was made - with the convincing argument that it is a common approach for business (and not: that it is a common approach for the EU and international level).

⁷ With the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Finance as strongest opponents.

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

Germany has a preference for so-called “small” coalition government, i.e. one of the larger parties (Social-democrats or Christian-democrats) has a coalition with one of the smaller ones (typically the Liberals, since 1998 for the first time the Greens); there has never been a minority government at the federal level, and very rarely a “big” coalition (i.e. made up of the two large parties).⁸ This situation is characterised as ‘competition democracy’ driven by competing parties, which is not very beneficial for long-term strategies. However, given an overall political stability which has developed by a relatively stable party system⁹, and a relatively ‘rational’ political culture, it is not easy to entirely dismantle policies of previous governments.

A particular problem for implementation derives from the federal system that has a council of representatives of the Laender (the Bundesrat), which in many cases (depending on the matter) has the right for approval of federal law proposals: If the opposition has a majority in this chamber, as is currently the case, the system is prone to stalemate.

All in all, long-term objectives are set, but whether they will be long-lasting even in the case of a change of government remains to be seen; it may be driven by previous success in moving towards them and/or - more likely - their overall popularity.

The SDS has a four-year term, as is rather common also in other countries. It is not directly linked to a government term: It was endorsed in 2002 by an outgoing government (which was then re-elected). It is said that the revision of the current strategy in 2006 will fall in a politically sensitive time, with an election then due which will possibly be more delicate than was the situation in 2002. The monitoring report after two years is at least partly also used for placing new themes for political reasons. This could be particularly the case in the 2006 report, but this remains the subject of speculation so far. The Parliament is currently not (yet) seen as a possible support for the long-term perspective that other countries are striving for (P, Hun) or consider as normal (S). Parliamentarians had been interested in becoming members of the SD council, an attempt that was not welcomed because they in tendency were seen as predominantly representing party politics, which was assessed as potentially hampering the work and spirit of a council. The SDS of 2002 was debated in Parliament, but without a formal vote.

In March 2004 the Parliament established a special “Committee for SD”, in addition to the standing committees that are organised by sectors such as the Ministries. This attempt was partly based on previous work of the Parliament regarding SD, which provided the ground for the kick-off of a SDS in Germany; partly on realising that the Parliament with the current mechanisms had difficulties in following up SD activities of the government (cf. ch. A.1.2); and partly on several recommendations of the SD council, which was not able to conduct effective dialogue with Parliament due to problems with finding suitable partners. The new Committee’s aim and purpose is to improve the cross-sectoral and comprehensive approach to SD by giving

⁸ *Ismayr, 2003, p.456.*

⁹ *Ismayr, 2003, p.458.*

recommendations to the standing committees, and being a watchdog for the process of SD. To this end it has the right to call plenary debates and to ask standing committees for contributions.¹⁰ It works regularly and has so far met seven times. It remains to be seen how this Committee will be able to improve the long-term dimension of SD. It might be a promising aspect that it was the previous majority in Parliament (now in opposition) that decided to prepare a SDS and to establish the SD council.

1.3.3 Approach for a SD strategy

In first drafts of the government towards a SDS the SD council had noticed an approach pointing in the wrong direction: a state-/government-centred, national and rather rigid ‘planning’ attitude, all of which in a way resembles German stereotypes. Key recommendations hence were to look more at societal ownership and the international dimension including the EU¹¹, and to work with (quantitative) objectives, indicators and timetables. All three aspects succeeded, and overall probably the ‘learning’ has started that SD is a learning process. Considering the priority fields of the consultation paper for the progress report, there seems to be the danger of a fall-back into small pieces, instead of maintaining the bigger picture and breaking it down. The indicators are presented in summaries of the SDS, but the existing quantitative objectives are not, and they are also not easy to find in the full text.¹² Also, far-reaching objectives like a 50% share of renewables in total energy consumption by 2050 are expressed without figures¹³. On the one hand this seems appropriate regarding the long-term perspective in terms of flexibility and accountability (“... permits the projection of *guideline figures* for the period from 2010 to 2050”). On the other hand both aspects reflect some remaining reservation regarding the use of objectives and timetables.

1.4 VERTICAL COORDINATION: LINK TO THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

Germany has a federal system, determined in the constitution, with 16 so-called Laender. The majority of them also have a sub-regional administrative level. For the preparation of the SDS the Laender were involved during the consultation procedure: their Prime Ministers’ offices were pro-actively asked for input. Only a few responded, but in some cases even the entire Laender-cabinet dealt with the federal draft SDS. In the same way the key associations of local authorities were asked for statements. There were no negative reactions and those Laender who had already been committed to SD policies/strategy considered the national SDS. However, the strategy hand has not triggered any new Land into becoming active, and also does not call upon the Laender to prepare their own SDSs.

The federal level considers the involvement of the regional and local level as important, which was e.g. also one reason to appoint two mayors to the SD

¹⁰ It though cannot propose decisions to the standing committees.

¹¹ Advice of the SD council, September 2001 (http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/service/download/pdf/Stellungnahme_zu_NHS.pdf).

¹² The approaches in UK, and in Sweden with the environmental quality objectives, are more clear.

¹³ “By the middle of the century, renewable energies should cover around half of the energy consumption” (Federal Government of Germany, 2002, p.97).

council, though so far it has not been the focus and/or been encouraged. One explanation in the preparation phase might have been the short time frame. Another could be that the relationship is currently not fully relaxed for two reasons: the opposition parties lead the majority of the Laender, and there is an ongoing debate about the reform of the federal system (with a special commission working on that)¹⁴.

The federal government communicates that SD has to take place on all levels, and regards its role as agenda setter also for themes for which it is not competent, e.g. land use for construction. The (national) SDS does not contain any measures that interfere with Laender competence, and is hence in a narrow ('legal') point of view a federal strategy. For moving ahead with such themes the government e.g. asked the SD council to organise a societal dialogue for land use with all levels and relevant actors. In such cases it is natural that conflicts may occur.

A more regular approach would be to put the SDS on the agenda of the permanent "conferences of the federal and Laender Ministers", which exist for each sector. So far the one for environment in 2002 established a working group for SD, which exchanges information on federal and Laender SD policies and strategies and gave input to the federal SDS review.

LA 21 processes in Germany started only slowly in the mid-1990s, with currently around 2.500 local authorities, i.e. around 17%, having at least initiated a LA 21-process. Overall the processes are assessed as facing the danger of losing steam when moving more towards implementation after the phases of strategy development. Besides internal improvements to be made it is stressed that better links between the local, regional, national and European level are required, and that the relevance of SD on the national level must grow, to keep the local activities "sustainable". A national campaign such as in Sweden would be desirable, and the federal government should better communicate its SDS, in which the municipalities should be asked to 'act locally'. And there is criticism that the chancellor does not link the overall policy program "Agenda 2010" (a title which already causes confusion) with the concept and strategy for SD.¹⁵ The SD council had proposed to send a copy of the SDS to all 17.000 mayors, but the idea was not taken up by the government.

In 2001 the federal government did though install, on a project basis, a "Servicepoint LA21", as a support mechanism. Also most of the Laender support the exchange of experience and knowledge transfer.

2 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Germany has seen quite drastic changes with moving from a traditionally state-/authority-centred and hierarchical political culture to a participatory orientation since the 1960s. Particularly the subsequent 1970s and early 80s saw the evolution of civil society initiatives, particularly in the field of envi-

¹⁴ It also covers competence questions, including a proposal to abolish the framework competence of the federal level, which is of special relevance for the field of environmental policy and law, because most of it falls under this provision.

¹⁵ Weber, 2003, p.4, 11.

ronment (with a strong anti-nuclear movement), peace and women's liberation.¹⁶ One result of this era was the foundation of the Green Party, and even if the direct engagement of civil society has decreased since the 1980s environmental NGOs e.g. are still strong and relevant.

The government(s) have responded rather slowly to demands for more involvement of – then – 'stakeholders' (as distinct from originally rather small and loose initiatives); and consultation requirements e.g. in planning and permitting procedures exist by law, but are in practice often not more than a mere exercise. On the policy making level though during the last decade it has become more and more common to consult with stakeholders in the sense of civil society movements.

Stakeholder formations like Trade Unions, Industry-, Employers'-, Business-, Trade-, Farmers- etc. associations traditionally have a strong influence on policy making, and on individual policies (e.g. with regard to chemicals). Altogether there are 1.700 interest groups registered at the German Parliament, i.e. those that intend to lobby or influence policy-making.¹⁷ There is no institutionalised socio-economic partnership, but negotiation on wages (with, partly, attempts also to address broader economic and structural policies) between employers and trade unions, with the government as mediator.

2.1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

On the initiative of the German Employers' Organisation of Industry (BDI) 19 German multi-nationals and/or companies with some international activities in 2000 founded "Econsense", a Forum for SD, which sets out to be:

- a platform for dialogue between business, politics and society,
- a think-tank for bringing together the competences of the business community and developing its own statements and solutions for SD,
- an opinion former and giving input to policy developments,
- a centre of competence for experiences and knowledge from the national and international levels.

This initiative was driven by the view that, without engagement in environment/SD/CSR, the companies would lose competitiveness, because of the perception of the professional public such as rating agencies (e.g. the sustainability index). Companies in Germany also tend to assume that, when talking about problems, the government would regulate. As this is not desired, the initiative is intended to demonstrate the self-regulation/-organisation potential of business in the field of SD.

The concept of CSR has started to play a role in Germany in 2001. It is perceived as a translation of the concept of SD on the business level: It is meant to combine economic success, employment and other social aspects, and environment (mainly from a product-related point of view).

The relation to the SDS is a bit contradictory: on the one hand it is recognised as being as most overarching and having had high input from stake-

¹⁶ Ismayr, 2003, p.471/472.

¹⁷ Ismayr, 2003, p.470.

holders, on the other hand it is only partly referred to, mainly because of other relevant ‘meta-’ players (like the UN CSD, the European Commission) and activities (like reflections on CSR as a management issue). This situation could be interpreted as a bottom-up approach, but the overall impression prevails that the SDS is as a matter of principle not acknowledged as an ‘overarching’ strategy, *because* it is predominantly a government document, despite its intention to be taken up by all societal actors. Themes of the SDS are taken up arbitrarily, and/or depending on the demands of the members. The approach of a SDS - with its framework, objectives, incentive for broad involvement of society, and flexible ways of implementation - is valued in principle, but not in the way that business deals with it (then it is rather ignored). The government is at the same time criticised for not referring systematically to its ‘own’ SDS, nor to international and EU agendas.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Stakeholder consultation for the SDS and the progress report follows regular procedures, with:

- a first consultation phase of two months on a draft paper (a draft outline of the framework and the priorities; for the progress report it is called a ‘consultation’ paper and proposes the future priority fields),
- a second consultation phase of three months on the draft strategy, or the draft progress report respectively.

Consultation is mainly conducted via a special website called ‘dialogue for sustainability’¹⁸, which was installed in 2004 for this purpose, and for overall communication on the SDS: there are e.g. also ‘chats’ on this website with key officials in charge¹⁹.

There is no information about the amount of feedback for the SDS preparation, or the degree and kind of criticism. In the course of the survey no significant negative assessment occurred, rather on the contrary, the process and the degree of possibilities for input are assessed positively.

The SD council plays a strong role in communicating SD policies, and has been experimenting with new ways.

3 SD COUNCIL (RNE)

The SD council RNE was established by the cabinet together with the concrete decision in 2000 to prepare a SDS, to advise the government in SD policies, prepare contributions to the national SDS, and propose concrete projects for and during implementation of the SDS. It is also meant to play a key role in fostering societal dialogue on sustainability. The council’s term was renewed in 2004 and reaches now until 2007, which is well beyond the current legislative term. The next Federal Government will have to decide whether to continue the policy scheme.

It is composed of 17 personalities who represent with their backgrounds environmental, economic and social concerns. It is not seen as a body for

¹⁸ www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de

¹⁹ e.g. on 22.6.04 with the head of the chancellery.

negotiating positions of their organisations, nor does it represent society: the latter would not be possible, at least in a big country. Potential council members are selected from the bigger stakeholder organisations and/or on the basis of personal qualities.²⁰

The council acts both on its own initiative and at the request of the government. From the point of view of the government it is a sign of recognition when asking the council for advice, or for organising an initiative for a certain issue, not as a means for influencing its agenda.

The council and its work are highly appreciated by all interview partners.

3.1 ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SD COUNCIL

Role vis-à-vis the SDS:

- The SDC gave the following key advice on the SDS²¹:
- Recommendation on quantitative objectives and indicators (September 2001), including a substantive model for the three themes - energy and climate change, agriculture/nutrition/health and mobility - that triggered the government decision to use indicators;
- Statement on the 'lighthouse'-projects of the federal government (November 2001);
- Proposal for five pilot projects for sustainability (November 2001): mostly accepted and implemented by 2004;
- Statement on the draft SDS 2002 – 2006 (January 2002);
- Statement on expectations for the progress report SDS (September 2003);
- Statement on the priority fields of the government for the update/mid-term review of the SDS 2004 (January 2004);
- Statement on the draft progress report SDS (March 2004);
- "Snapshots sustainability and society" (June 2004).

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

- Advisory board to the government, from a viewpoint of civil society;
- reminder/watchdog for the holistic/integrated view;
- think-tank;
- stakeholder/expert dialogue "among each other", including that consensus building among the members should take place;
- stakeholder members to take the views into their organisations;
- agenda setting and tackling difficult policy issues; agreements (especially unexpected ones) are appreciated;
- fostering societal dialogue on SD policies by addressing actors that have a multiplier effect.

²⁰ The start-up phase saw some discussion about the selection of council members (not all groups, which groups ...), which then kind of ebbed away though created facts created and the valued work of the council.

²¹ www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/n_strategy/strategy_2002/index.html;
www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/n_strategy/strategy_2004/index.html
www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/documents/statements/index.html.

3.2 INTERNAL ASPECTS OF OPERATION

Council members operate on equal footing:

- The council has succeeded in developing a cooperative approach with consensus aimed at, - there is no majority voting. The atmosphere is characterised by open brainstorming on themes and strategic issues.
- It has an independent status with no government members.
- “Double-hat” of council members: The council members do not ‘represent’ in a narrow way the organisation that nominated them (i.e. their ‘home’ organisation). They operate and discuss as individuals on the basis of pluralism of ideas, and trust given by their organisation. The baseline for a council member regarding personal “freedom” is what they mean to possibly communicate into their organisation. Sometimes this may be challenging. A conflicting case was a statement on eco-taxes, for which no agreement was reached: Here some voices say that it failed because of stakeholder politics.

Environmental NGOs e.g. find that they have enough opportunities as stakeholder themselves to give input to policies, and that participating in the SD council opens new opportunities.²²

During the starting phase of the council the personal assistants of the council members (of their ‘home’ organisation) participated in the meetings; this arrangement was perceived as including too much the stakeholder view (“watchdogs”), and was therefore abolished.

- All council members have a background in organisations that have a long history of standing for their positions, hence there is an equal self-confidence (including environmental NGOs, which is not necessarily the case elsewhere).

Relation to and role of socio-economic partners:

As introduced above there is no institutionalised socio-economic partnership²³. Trade unionists and business people are members of the SD council, with the former as a relatively weak part. One deficiency so far can be observed in social policies: there are currently several high-level ad-hoc advisory commissions in Germany (e.g. for health reform, welfare and unemployment, pension reform, immigration), which have, in contrast to the RNE, the function to ease the burden of policy-makers. Because of the abundance of such advice, and partly because of double-membership of RNE-council members in such commissions, it has so far been difficult for the RNE to connect or integrate SD with the overall agenda of social reforms (which is at the same time perceived as important), and the council has missed to proactively remind the government of the need for better integrating SD and the “Agenda 2010”²⁴. The relationship to Econsense (cf. ch. A.2.1) is construc-

²² This would not apply to action-oriented NGOs like Greenpeace.

²³ There is a high-ranking, traditional, scientific ‘council of wise men for the economy’, which deals with macro-economic questions and provides annual prospects for economic growth. Because of its scientific background there have been contacts in the past to the Environment council SRU (which were though not really strengthened for SD questions).

²⁴ It did finally criticise in its statement to the consultation paper for the progress report 2004 (RNE, 2004, p.1).

tive, partly also supported by the fact that there are close links between the RNE council members from the business community and Econsense members.

Relation to government departments:

The council has no government members, but conducts regular dialogue with the chancellery, which is the main responsible body for the SDS, and other Ministries if appropriate or desired.

The character of government relation seems to be a moving target. There is no overall scheme for the relation to governments departments as the council stays on issue-related working terms to nearly all involved Ministries. Sometimes the relation turns out to be of a watchdog character, e.g. when a recommendation does not fit into the current policy scheme. In other issues the government relation is more constructive and plays along a common line of activities building the public backup. As an overall pattern, SD policies seem to be tolerated by individual Ministries as long as the administration can successfully work them into the Ministry's current flow of political activities. From the council's view this does not mean that SD policies – perceived as the integration task with long-term perspective – are already definitely accepted. In particular, the agenda of SD is not accepted with the sense of urgency the council is applying to the issues of climate change, demographic development, new prosperity models and competition, and CSR.²⁵

3.3 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COUNCIL

1 Government's view

- Valued as a stakeholder advisory body with high quality work; statements are noted intensely; independent input is appreciated;
- council triggered the government decision to use indicators for the SDS;
- raising awareness for SD has been achieved for the “interested” public, not for a wider public (which is not assessed as a failure of the SDC, but as being caused by an overall minor interest of the public in politics, in contrast to e.g. the 1970s and 80s; it also has inherent limits because of the small budget of the RNE): very critical recommendations and/or unexpected agreements could get some media attention; particularly impressed by the annual conferences and other bigger events;
- addressing and tackling difficult policy fields: it is highly welcomed by the chancellery when unexpected agreements are achieved as for coal policy, which gave a new impulse to the Ministry for Economic Affairs and will probably have changed its prejudice that the council is an assembly of coal-opposing environmentalists; it also raised the profile of the council in that Ministry;

²⁵ Currently, the SDC is co-operating with the Ministry for Consumption in a project on sustainable consumption and gave a recommendation on forest; it recently gave recommendations to the Ministry of Economy concerning clean coal and energy policy, it gave recommendations to the Ministry of Mobility and Housing concerning land consumption and is cooperating in a project on energy contracting, it is cooperating with the Ministry for Development in a project on global sustainable land use. In the past, the SDC cooperated with many other Ministries and will do so in future

- certain successful initiatives that also give new impulses to sectoral Ministries (e.g. the “sustainable shopping bag” did so for the Ministry for Consumer Affairs and Agriculture);
- professional work of the secretariat, very good cooperation with the chancellery.

2 SDC’s view

- Significant contributions to the preparation of the SDS 2002 and its review in 2004 (cf. ch. 3.1 above): particularly the agreement on targets and indicators, which was quite disputed in the cabinet, was an achievement of the council; and some proposed objectives, including some far-reaching ones, were taken up²⁶; special contribution to the progress report 2004 (“Snapshots sustainability and society”, June 2004).
- Unexpected agreements, e.g. on coal policy: a council working group prepared a statement, which was discussed in the coal region with experts from the respective Land government, energy producers and scientists; the endorsed recommendation was presented and further discussed, and published inter alia in a brochure of the energy industry (it is also mentioned that the Ministry for Economic Affairs has noted this paper with interest);
- Agenda setting on particular issues:
 - the target of limiting land use for construction to 30 hectares per day;
 - sustainable consumption: recommendation for a ‘sustainable shopping bag’ (including a practice test in households, discussion in several workshops), brochure ‘guidelines for sustainable consumption’;²⁷
 - Eco-tax and emission trading: recommendation of a council working group, did not get the agreement of the full council and was hence not endorsed as recommendation;
 - export of used goods (commissioned a study, discussion with the Federation of Industry and the Ministry and Agency for Development Aid, council recommendation on standards for efficiency, environment and security);
- innovative approaches for communicating SD to an interested and wider public (with a small budget):
 - three annual conferences with a format that tried to illustrate SD as a societal project,
 - writing competition organised with schools,

²⁶ Reduction of land use for construction to 30 hectares per day, share of renewables (incl. 50% by 2050), 40% CO₂ reduction 2020 (government conditioned this with an EU reduction target of 30%), spending for research and development aid.

²⁷ Another interesting example in this field was a meeting with the ‘industry committee for consumer goods’, which raised a basic discussion about two strategic approaches: a) labeling and liability, with standing rights for the consumer (the committee’s “belief system”), and b) starting consumer policies from the demand side (possible alternative). The initiative so far led to nowhere, and hence just came some years too early.

- marketing competition for teenagers,
- supported a student film project for SD,
- film competition for young and elderly people,
- initiating a talk-show series on the eve of the WSSD,
- two workshops with actors from art and culture on the relation of these “fields” to SD;
- proposed pilot projects to the government and cooperated in their implementation (energy contracting for federal buildings, refurbishing of buildings with low energy standards, communication strategy for sustainable transport, info campaign on consumer choice, fighting hunger with sustainable agriculture);
- criticised the Federal Government for inconsistent priorities in the review 2004, and that the overall government program for social reform ‘Agenda 2010’ is not sufficiently communicated within the frame of SD and the SDS;
- At the request of the government the council organised a dialogue process on the issue of land use and land consumption for housing and construction purposes, and presented an advice in October 2004.

Overall the council receives a lot of credit for its work from all interviewees.

Success-factors of a SD council

- Independence: members should not represent their organisation but act as individual personalities with the experience of their organisation as background;
- Try to develop an attitude of experimentation (non-public meetings of the council, council members should participate without assistants);
- Gaining acknowledgement of the government through quality of work, and getting to agreements between stakeholders; in turn this supports the self-confidence of the council (and its members);
- Strong chair and well-acknowledged personalities as council members; include members who have not been engaged in SD policies before;
- Council linked to the chancellery (as is the SDS): provides for more authority, attention and feedback to the council; non-biased perception of the council (rather than being linked to one department); it has the explicit and implicit freedom for discussion with any party.

B Themes and scope

In the first SDS (2002-2006) key thematic fields are²⁸:

- 1 climate change and energy policies (#),
- 2 sustainable mobility (#),
- 3 environment, food quality and health (partly #),
- 4 demographic change (#),
- 5 education,
- 6 innovative enterprises,
- 7 reducing land use for construction.

The first three were made priorities for the first half of the term²⁹, plus the cross-sectoral one 'global responsibility'. The others were announced to become priorities in the second half, though the first SDS partly already contains quantitative objectives for the other fields, namely³⁰

- reduction of the rate of use of land for residential and transport purposes from 130 hectares per day to 30 hectares per day by 2020,
- increase the investments for education from 2,46% to 3% of GDP by 2010.

Other key quantitative objectives are e.g.:

- double energy productivity by 2020,
- double the share of renewables in energy consumption by 2010 from 2,1% (2000) to 4,2% (the SDC had proposed 8%), and their share in electricity consumption from 6,3% (2000) to 12,5% by 2010,
- decrease transport intensity by 5% (compared to 1999) by 2020,
- increase the share of railway use in goods delivery to 25% by 2015 (from 15% in 2000; note: 1991 had 21%).

The headline indicators are grouped under the strategic themes::

- intergenerational equity (includes indicators for natural resource use, state budget, innovation and education),
- quality of life (includes indicators for economic prosperity, quality of the environment, mobility, nutrition, health and crime),
- social cohesion (includes indicators for employment, equal opportunities, families)
- international responsibility (includes indicators for expenditure for development cooperation and opening EU markets).

Some of the indicators themselves are objectives, or they are trend indicators.

In the consultation paper for the progress report 2004, which covers a revision of the priorities, two out of the four remaining priorities are selected, namely demographic change (now framed as 'potential for elderly people in

²⁸ Note: The fields indicated with (#) are also priority fields of the EU SDS, which is though a mere coincidence and was not a motive for selection.

²⁹ which was already decided by the cabinet in 2000 (with the decision about preparing a SDS).

³⁰ Federal Government of Germany, 2002.

economy and society’) and reducing land use for construction. The previous priority energy policy is reinforced (‘new energy supply structure including renewable energy sources’), and a new one is added, namely ‘alternative fuels and engine technologies’. The themes education and innovative enterprises are dropped, which the SDC council criticised with particular reference to the UN-decade on education for SD.³¹ The previous priority fields food quality/health/agriculture and mobility are intended to be continued according to the draft progress report. It is also planned that the progress report 2004 will already announce two priority fields for the SDS revision 2006, namely biodiversity (with the MinE leading) and sustainable budget policy (with the Ministry of Finance leading).

³¹ RNE, 2004, p.2.

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

1 CONSIDERATION AND IMPACT OF THE EU SDS

The commitment to prepare a SDS was triggered by the prospect of WSSD 2002 on the horizon, and a new government (with the Green party in the coalition) underpinned this commitment with an institutional framework. The EU SDS did not play a role, although it had been endorsed just before the work on the national SDS started (Oct. 2001). The main reason was the short timeframe for preparation and prioritization of the domestic focus: the government wanted first to explore the domestic potential for strategic change, and demonstrate with a national SDS that an integration of the three dimensions can succeed. When progress made it intended to influence European policies 'bottom-up' with SD considerations, together with other countries as partners in individual policy fields. But it is acknowledged that, from the point of view of integration, this approach falls a bit short. Also, considering the so far short period of activities in SD policies, it is thought that a stronger focus on the European dimension might be feasible from 2005.

The SD council, in its input to the national SDS, also did not consider the EU SDS, for the same reasons of capacity constraints; this is more understandable because it was only established in April 2001 and had to go through consensus-finding procedures by October. But it meanwhile stresses that the European dimension must be better considered, and that SD policies must pro-actively be integrated in the early development of policies at the EU level (and not only when a Council of Ministers deals with it). It has been very active over the last two years (cf. ch. C.2 below).

The national SDS already plays a role as a reference point for certain EU policies.³²

The Lisbon process is predominantly considered as rather remote and – within the government – as a matter of “European circles” (“coffee parties”), which draft awkward wording that does not fit with regular policy work. Concrete European policies, e.g. on chemicals, are though considered interesting and are dealt with actively. The open method of coordination is less relevant, or even not taken seriously (e.g. Lisbon as just a nice P.R. opportunity).

Overall, for Germany as for the other big member states, the EU seems to be less ‘important’ than for small ones, because of a stronger national ‘fixation’, and EU policies tend to be dealt with in a reactive way. The German position as a nett contributor to EU funds supports a certain arrogance. One other interpretation particularly in Germany (as compared with e.g. France) is that political careers are not made via or including an EU phase, but solely in the link of the Laender and federal level, and hence also EU policies are not

³² E.g. in a preparation of a German position for a Spring Summit the MinE wished to include a statement on decoupling of economic and transport growth, which the federal transport Ministry was not fond of; but the chancellery then got accepted that the German position is based on the SDS ('basis of reference'). This mechanism may also become true when progress is made in even more difficult policy fields (e.g. coal).

important. Politicians and civil servants working for the EU tend to have a negative image.

Additionally it is felt that some of the most important policy fields, such as the reform of the energy supply structure, can be (and should first be) tackled nationally.

Meanwhile the attitude has changed a bit: The 2004 government progress report on the SDS, refers explicitly to the EU SDS. Some policy fields, and explicitly energy, are now clearly linked to the European level.

2 SD COUNCIL (RNE): EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

The RNE has been involved in European cooperation through EEAC since shortly after its establishment in 2001.³³ Since October 2002 its Secretary General has co-chaired the EEAC Working Group on Sustainable Development (together with the UK SD Commission).³⁴ Activities regarding exchange of information with other SD councils are very much welcomed by the government³⁵.

Other international activities of the RNE included:

- Recommendation for a global Commission on ‘sustainability and globalisation’ (January 2002);
- Participation of delegates at the WSSD, organising two parallel events (one together with the Minister for Development Aid)³⁶;
- Recommendation for the implementation of the WSSD results (November 2002);
- Proposals for the implications of the WSSD for German development aid policies (November 2002);
- Proposal for the involvement of the council in the preparation of the international energy conference RENEWABLES 2004;
- Recommendations on ‘global agricultural market and sustainable development’ (January 2003), combined with a public workshop in June 2003;
- Public workshop “The Johannesburg Challenge”, co-organised with the Ministries for Development Aid and Foreign Affairs.

3 LISBON PROCESS: PREPARATION OF SPRING SUMMITS

The preparation of the Spring Summits reveals some coordination deficits: There are two separate departments in the chancellery for Europe and for sector policies, including the environment/SD unit, with no clear cooperation for the EU SDS/Spring Summit preparation. Similarly, in the Ministry for

³³ The two other German advisory bodies, the German Environment Council (SRU) and the Scientific Council for global change (WBGU), have been EEAC member since 1997 and 1999 respectively, with the SRU as founding member of the network in 1993, and a far-reaching commitment with hosting the EEAC secretariat 1999 – 2002.

³⁴ The Working Group comprises SD and other councils engaged in the SD agenda. It has so far prepared two key statements: “Strengthening sustainable development in the EU”, December 2002, as input for the Spring Summit 2003 for the revision of the EU SDS post Johannesburg, and November 2003 as input for the Spring Summit 2004. It was also key author of the “Kinsale Challenge” (April 2004), which addresses key recommendations for the EU SDS review.

³⁵ which even states that it would be desirable if other SD councils also found an always open ear in the PM offices.

³⁶ The WBGU also participated in the WSSD and organised such parallel events.

Environment there is a Unit for Environment and Sustainable Development Strategies, as well as one for International and European Affairs, which cooperate to a certain extent. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a department for general European Affairs which e.g. dealt with the Convention, and a unit for environment, which e.g. coordinated the German preparation of the WSSD and takes part in the 'Green Diplomacy Network'. The relation between the chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding SD is not fully clear.

The Spring Summit is prepared for by the Europe department of the chancellery, which gives its position to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which then collects and coordinates input from other Ministries (including the MinE). Regarding the EU SDS the MinE has the main responsibility, and there is a strong link between the chancellery and the MinE. Within the chancellery there is a weekly coordination meeting for European policies, including environment; also regarding the Lisbon strategy the environment/SD unit gives input to the European department of the chancellery, but overall not much capacity can be devoted to that.

The SD council has given input to the Spring Summits 2003 and 2004 via the EEAC Working Group SD (cf. footnote 34), but directed to the European level only, and informed the federal government. Because it had been established only two months earlier, it could not advise the government for the Gothenburg summit.

4 POLICY FIELDS UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM

Upstream action - EU activity is desired/required

Because of the common Lisbon objective it is claimed that EU action is strongly needed in the field of technology advancement, i.e. EU research policy (and budget) has to focus on innovation technologies for SD. In particular:

- energy policy, particularly combined with technology advancement (Europe has to show that electricity can be produced CO₂-free, even with conventional power plants: to develop such a plant should be aimed at for e.g. 2015; similar advancement could and should take place for solar plants); therefore research and innovation technologies for CO₂-free electricity production, and also e.g. fuel cells, hydrogen are needed;
- the 7th Research Framework Program needs to include the possibility for pilot projects in SD;
- transport: the Transeuropean Networks (TENS) need to improve freight transport on rail.

It is partly stated that it would be desirable if the EU SDS had quantitative targets and a set of indicators, which could become a reference point for all member states.

Downstream impact - EU policies hampering national SD processes

The liberalisation of the electricity market is seen as a possible problem for

Germany regarding the phase out of nuclear power (e.g. how to stay competitive? how to prevent EU funds being spent on nuclear power plants in accession countries?).

Conditional targets and implementation

- Germany established a CO₂ reduction target for the year 2020 (- 40%), whose implementation it intends to make dependent on an EU target of -30%³⁷, though also in this respect the focus lies on domestic progress, before possibly asking the EU to table a proposal³⁸; The EU target of 20% share of biofuels by 2020³⁹ raised a discussion in Germany whether this should be just adopted or whether a more ambitious target should be set⁴⁰.

Both cases reflect an attitude that a national fore-running approach is considered as feasible if the 'distance' ahead of the other member states is not too large. But in the first case above, that 'condition' would require urging the EU to set such a target, which apparently has not happened. In other cases, such as the share of renewables, the existing EU target serves only as a reference point, as Germany goes beyond it on its own initiative.

Overall assessment

Although the EU (SDS) has so far not yet played a role in national SD policies, it has meanwhile been recognised as important including the need to be improved: particularly as national targets will increasingly be conditional upon EU targets (like the German CO₂-reduction target for 2020).

³⁷ First Draft progress report of the federal government, April 2004, p. 68 (www.dialog-nachhaltigkeit.de).

³⁸ Germany was also reserved vis-à-vis the UK attempt to make this as priority for its Presidency. One reason also was that Russia shouldn't get a signal that Europe already moves on, though Russia has not yet ratified the Kyoto protocol.

³⁹ The EU-Directive for biofuels (COM(2003) 193 final) from May 2003 requires to increase the consumption of biofuels to 2% by 2005 and 5,75% by 2010. On the basis of an optimistic scenario the Commission considers a share of 20% by 2020 as achievable (Green Paper Towards a European Strategy for the Security of Energy Supply, COM(2000) 769 final).

⁴⁰ The latter is a recommendation of the SD council for reasons of technological competitiveness and market advantage.

D Achievements and shortcomings in the national SD agenda

1 SUCCESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS

- The SDS process, and particularly the lead responsibility of the chancellor, has led to increased awareness and visibility, also with the contributions of the SD council.
- The comprehensive approach of the SDS is predominantly assessed as positive.
- Establishment and continuous improvement of dialogue structures with society including stakeholder involvement is also assessed positively.
- The SDS has served in many cases as a reference point for sectoral policies, and its objectives can be defended against sectoral interests with the 'guidance competence' of the chancellor.
- The green cabinet, and the working group of civil servants preparing its meetings, have increased cooperative approaches and mutual understanding.

Achievements in policy fields include:

- front-running role in renewables, and a program for phasing out nuclear power; it is stated that the 2010 target for renewables in the SDS triggered the 2020 target later endorsed in the revision of the Renewables Act;
- good performance in energy efficiency; emission trading scheme successfully implemented;
- agriculture policy (to be demonstrated in the progress report), though it is stated that it must be furthered against the background of the revised CAP;
- new approach for biofuels strategies;
- new approach to tackle the effects of demographic change on the workforce and the public health system (inter alia: enabling strategies for elderly people).

2 MOST DIFFICULT POLICY FIELDS

Mobility / Transport

This policy field is considered as particularly difficult, if not as the most difficult one, and so far not yet tackled very much (though it has been a priority field for the past phase). Reasons are structural, with a strong and important automobile industry, and also a high relevance of cars for the citizens (including emotionally). Efficiency increases in engine technology are eaten up by all kinds of fancy features in the individual cars (e.g. air conditioning), and the number of cars and the total distances travelled wipe out the rest of the achieved efficiency increase. Shifting freight transport from road to rail has been almost always a goal, but never really got anywhere. The current government had intended to introduce a fee per mileage for heavy vehicles, which almost embarrassingly failed for practical reasons. The Eco-tax is partly successful.

The SD council has not (yet) worked significantly in the field of transport policy.

Energy / Climate change

One third of the total energy consumption is claimed by transport, and one third by private households (heating), both of which are difficult to tackle. Restructuring the energy supply is a challenging task in total (which is therefore chosen as a further priority field for the 2nd phase of the current SDS): Regarding nuclear power Germany has agreed on a phasing-out plan with the sector, and wants to demonstrate that sustainable energy supply can work under this condition (though replacement of these capacities is a challenge). The country has become a fore-runner in renewable technologies and a special Renewables Act, which guarantees prices for the producers of electricity produced with renewable sources, has led to an increase in its share. But electricity production still depends largely on fossil sources (with a high share of coal, which is a traditional, and still subsidised sector⁴¹ and has to be tackled. The policy process is described as fragmented with no overall concept on the part of the government.⁴²

The burden sharing agreement is considered as challenging, but the country is perceived as being on track - though reductions in CO₂ emissions have been largely due to the breakdown of energy-intensive industry in former East Germany. Currently much effort is being put into organising emission trading.

Land use

The ambitious objective of reducing the rate of land use for construction from 130 hectares per day to 30 hectares by 2020 will be challenging to achieve, inter alia because measures have to be taken by the Laender and at the local level.

Consumption / growth / life style

The issue is ideologically biased, because of the assumption that changing lifestyle has a normative and moralistic component. It is also difficult to tackle because of spread competences on the three levels. The SD council has contributed with a major initiative (cf. ch. A.3.3).

Other fields that need to be tackled are: waste (a shift in policy is likely to be needed) and education for SD (competence of the Laender, and they have not succeeded in implementing more than pilot projects).

3 IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS FOR THE NATIONAL SDS

Procedural: improve vertical coordination.

Content: work harder on implementation in terms of 'transition' process (particularly in the field of energy and transport).

Overall: make SD more concrete e.g. with many more pilot projects, which requires leadership.

⁴¹ Partly political reasons: the coal mining areas used to be the backbone of the social-democratic party.

⁴² Particular requests include: Energy policy should also be done with technology advancement in the conventional sector (in light of: the USA is doing so and will otherwise achieve a lead; Kyoto needs a "plan B"): European research funding is needed (cf. C.4.). Also, energy use needs to become more efficient ("Factor 4").

4 NATIONAL SDS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Achievements and challenges are assessed in a summarised way as follows⁴³:

- + Commitment of the PM (chancellor), lead responsibility, steering and coordination by the chancellery (PM office), with a green cabinet as horizontal coordination mechanism; this role is considered as a key success factor, which has supported sticking to targets and supported the commitment of other Ministries;
- +/(◆) SDS as a “living document” with priority fields and a comprehensive approach, and (partly quantitative) underpinning objectives; though it is also criticised for lack of vision and strategic approach, lack of link to other overarching government program(s), and for being not ambitious enough;
- +/(◆) The mid-term review of the SDS was not entirely systematic: some previously announced priorities were left out with no reference or explanation, the previous priority fields lack measures of progress and future measures are unclear;
- +/(◆) Stakeholder consultation is now taken seriously, and the SD council plays a key role in experimenting with new forms of increasing involvement of society;
- (+)/◆ So far poor vertical coordination: will have to be improved, if only because of certain objectives that can only be reached with strong commitment and cooperation of the Laender and local level; LA 21 initiatives still play a role, and may become a valuable partner;
- (◆) So far poor link to EU policies and the EU SDS (recently improving); there are also coordination deficits in this respect.

E Recommendations for the EU-SDS review

These key recommendations are based on the SD council’s views, which also gave input to the EU SDS review:

- Have a single and understandable document with a transparent architecture for Lisbon and SD strategy;
- Get the link of EU SDS and Lisbon process right; it would be desirable to include in the Lisbon strategy the goal “most eco-efficient economy”;
- “Go public”: SD needs leadership, - bottom-up alone doesn’t work; participation of business, the social sector and civil society is needed at the same time; establishing a stakeholder advisory mechanism would support this;
- the EU SDS is remote from the people: overall communication needs to be improved, and pilot projects for innovative technology should be included (the 7th Research Framework Program provides an opportunity);

⁴³ + achievement
 (+) partial achievement
 +/◆ mixed: achievement and challenge
 (◆) partial challenge
 ◆ challenge¹²⁵

- indicators and progress reports are important for the process, which initiates a public debate: include quantitative targets, indicators and timetables in the SDS (also with the increasing cases of national targets that are conditional upon EU targets);
- the EU needs an institutional and procedural framework for SD policies, because coordination requirements are enormous, and a central and/or advisory institution is needed to keep the issue on the agenda.

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INTERVIEWEES

Günther Bachmann, Stephanie Gerteiser, Berthold Goeke, Nika Greger, Volker Hauff, Edda Müller, Albert Statz

Colophon

Sustaining Sustainability is the second background study of EEAC and the first of this EEAC series.

The first background study, *Environmental Governance in Europe*, was published as RMNO series, Preliminary studies and background studies, nr. V.02 (December 2003), Lemma, Utrecht.

ISBN 90-77893-01-6

Publication

Uitgeverij Lemma bv, Utrecht

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Design and Layout

A10plus grafische vormgeving & illustratie, Rotterdam

More information

European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC)

c/o RMNO - P.O. Box 93051, NL - 2509 AB Den Haag

T 070 31 55 210

F 070 31 55 220

E ingeborg.niestroy@rmno.nl

I www.eeac-network.org