



Stimulating informed debate
– Sustainable Development Councils in EU Member States.
A compilation of tasks, capacities, and best practice

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Catching a glimpse of future

Foreword by Günther Bachmann

With already six billion people co-existing on a fragile planet and population figures still rising and individual needs increasing, the challenge ahead is unprecedented. The inequality in prosperity in times when mankind is knowingly heating up the planet is the single most important burden for future life on earth. Future is not any more just what will happen. For the generations ahead of us future is what we did to them.

How to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs? This question was moulded into the concept of sustainable development some 20 years ago by the UN Commission lead by Gro Harlem Brundtland. In Europe, it is our share of the common but differentiated responsibility to lead by example and to act as global frontrunner. First attempts to do so are like a glimpse of what will have to become widely shared exercise.

All over the world people in politics, enterprises and social movements increasingly realise that we have to come up with new solutions and profound changes of mainstream policies that are credibly linking commitment to measurable steps. Money flow and technologies are important, as are new arrangements for democracy and the management of the commons. Integration of fragmented aspects is key. That is what strategies for sustainable development are about and why they mark new political thinking. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy encourages Member States to adopt national strategies for sustainable development and to establish national multi-stakeholder Councils. Where they exist Councils effectively promote sustainability thinking, stimulate informed debate, and, through their advice, qualify national SD strategies.

The German Council for Sustainable Development commissioned this study in order to display the wide frame of action being taken by individual SD councils in Europe. It encourages those who are already active to use it as a reference and to challenge the limits to action that budget constraints and political culture may be setting. This study disproves those who are still reluctant of the added value of SD Strategies and do not want to commit themselves at all.

I am grateful to Ingeborg Niestroy for her devoted expertise and workforce once again after the 2004 benchmark study (see footnote 16). The study shows the capacity SD Councils have already achieved. It provides insights and a profound compilation of the ever so different action that is currently under way throughout Europe. On behalf of the working group that brings together experts from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, the UK, and the regional councils from Catalonia/Spain and Flanders/Belgium my thanks also go to the community of European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) for allowing us to make best use of the network's capacities. By listing examples the study shows:

- Successful communication is possible and can be fancy - but councils need more support in order to reach the broader public.
- Mutual learning within Europe has shown promising results – but expanding activities here and reaching out globally will require substantial service support.
- Stimulating informed debate and involving people is feasible – but for any reliable long term success Europe needs to redirect the funding mechanisms in order to make sustainability a benchmark for taking action or inaction.
- Sustainability action can be innovative and can attract experts and the private sector – but in order to really make a difference it is necessary to seriously invest into sustainability research and arts.

Europe needs to provide for a longer view and to change perspectives. Otherwise there won't be a way towards low-carbon economies and no way of turning the demographic change in European countries into a benefiting option for the European social and political model.

Günther Bachmann, Secretary General, German Council for Sustainable Development

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Executive summary

Civil society has become an important voice and player in modern democracies, which is vital particularly vital for complex strategies and long-term changes such as sustainable development. There are different traditions in different political cultures, some established for a longer time and some rather developing, for involving civil society and their respective organisations in political decision-making. For the government as a key actor, above and besides the market, civil society has performed a selection and aggregation of a broad range of views.

Sustainable Development Councils (SDCs) cumulate and widen the functions of individual organisations of civil society. Through their link to a wide range of political actors and leadership in sustainability, and the expertise combined in the council, they build up additional weight to the political sounding and creativity provided by civil society organisations (CSOs).

The Brundtland Commission and subsequently Agenda 21 have promoted to establish SD councils, both however more with the concept of a formal representation than with the aspiration of nowadays SDCs to fostering dialogue among stakeholders, and between stakeholders and government, as well as monitoring progress and encouraging initiatives and innovation for SD.

In Europe around thirteen member states have advisory councils that are explicitly engaged in the SD agenda, plus some at regional level. They have in common an emphasis on members from civil society organisations. In addition to this capacity there are also councils for environmental and related policies, which are usually more of an expert type. The lines between the two types are fuzzy. Some countries (also) have socio-economic councils, which have traditionally not dealt with SD. In some cases the respective SDC stimulates cooperation.

This empirical study of existing SD councils (or similar ones) explores two tasks and functions allocated to SDCs by the EU SDS of 2006, namely stimulating informed debate on SD and involving civil society. With a closer look, councils' missions and activities may be grouped under the headers:

- giving policy advice,
 - acting as agent and dialogue facilitator,
 - communicating and stimulating involvement,
- with overlapping internal and external facets of them.

Giving policy advice, for example, is obviously preceded by debate among stakeholders in the council and processes for achieving agreements. This lies at the heart of a council's being and is in itself a manner of mutual learning and capacity building.

The capacity of own agenda setting is also fundamental to giving policy advice, for which the inter- and transdisciplinary composition of a council is a good breeding ground. This also comprises an inbuilt potential for innovative approaches and policies for SD. SDCs keep the overall issue on the agenda and fill it with seriousness, are reminders of the integrated view and long-term perspective, are able to address neglected issues, reply to issues raised by governments, tackle contentious topics that may prepare and/or add extra value to government's engagement. A regular task is to give input to developing, implementing and monitoring the national SD strategy.

For a government it is beneficial to have a kind of "one shop one stop" for civil society views with an SD council, which is at the same time not the exclusive addressee. For an SDC it is favourable if leadership for SD in the government is at the "highest level", and its key contact is hence in the Prime Minister's Office (or similar).

The core idea of an SDC is that its members bring with them their background in certain dimensions of SD and different CSOs, and have the chance and challenge to cover the span between their background and/or organisation and the demand in the council for open deliberation "beyond borders". This opportunity is not offered in the traditional political arm wrestling of day-to-day interest representation, and it makes SD councils unique. A council member is allowed by its home organisation to act in this way, and with this he/she may extend

and go beyond original views, but still has the organisation in the back of the mind and works along a subtle line of how far extension may go.

While this situation could be called "soft representation", there are also compositions with a more "mandated representation" as well as "expert" councils, which tend to strive for the former style.

Councils' compositions are meant to "mirror" society, and with this a "multi-stakeholder" composition means societal stakeholders as members, with scientific input also provided. Most councils in Europe are established in this way as "independent" ones. They have regular contacts to all levels in government and some councils have government representatives as observers. Very few countries have an "embedded" council, i.e. it is government lead and/or dominated. Such bodies are more or less a government coordination mechanism with stakeholder involvement, and they provide a dialogue platform for CSOs and government. If such bodies also aim at agreements between government and civil society, there might be other governance challenges regarding this relation, regarding the representation of CSOs and their individual manoeuvring space outside such a council.

Independent councils foster the dialogue of stakeholders "among each other" and they develop joint advice and recommendations. The art of process in the council lies in trying to understand how a controversial style of debate could be transformed into a mutual comprehensive learning without circumventing or fading out the contrariness of issues.

Acting as agent and facilitator hence starts in the council itself, and council members are expected to carry results of the joint deliberations into their own organisation. But it goes also far beyond this: SDCs are "webbing into society" by organising discussions in all kinds of formats with a wide range of actors in civil society, the private sector, academia, parliament and government. They try to foster high-level commitment by inviting Ministers, Parliamentarians and business and other leaders to internal council meetings and public events. They also encourage the "learning society" for SD, ranging from schools to specific learning facilities to television and e-communication. This reaching out takes place at least when an advice is presented for discussion, but often already in the developing phase, as well as in feedback loops. SDCs trigger government for action and might succeed in sparking snowball effects, i.e. getting others to act with own projects etc. A key challenge is to stimulate actors so far not involved in the SD agenda.

In some cases the communication task is formulated explicitly, and might extend to the wider public. Efforts in wider outreach require more resources than processes with certain target groups. If equipped, these councils are able to spend more capacity, to be more pro-active and to experiment with further means for political communication. There are innovative examples of such activities, ranging from contests of all kinds (creative fields) to establishing a web-based "SD Panel" with hundreds of individuals involved. There have also been some successful actions for involving media as important actor in general.

All in all, SDCs may be trendsetters when they succeed in framing topics in the SD perspective, with being at the same time "down to earth" and "telling". They may be successful in attention raising and stimulating informed debate as credible agent and facilitator. They are a beneficial means for government for this webbing SD into society, and back into government. In order to fulfil this, there needs to be a serious will and decent capacity, which also enables to experiment more with different means of deliberating, facilitating and communicating.

1. How to get civil society involved

Sustainable Development Councils cumulate and widen the functions of individual organisations of civil society. Through their link to political leadership in sustainability and the expertise combined in the council, they built up an additional weight to the political sounding usually provided by civil society organisations. In order to effectively implement and upgrade this functioning of Sustainable Development Councils it is useful to review how civil society and civil society organisations are perceived in general.

'Civil society' is commonly understood as the arena (that evolves) between the state, economy/market and private sphere. Civil society has become self-organised for long, being it with the purpose of organising leisure activities (usually not political) or of organising interests, which then is usually also aimed at influencing politics and policy-making. The second notion of 'civil society' refers to the ideal of developing societies towards a more participatory type of democracy, i.e. promoting innovative, wider and deeper levels of citizens' participation in political decision-making, as a further development of the classic type of a representative democracy.

A large variety of terms exist in the context of organised civil society, with different definitions, connotations and intentions, having changed, and changing over time. The most common ones are NGOs (with different types), interest/lobby/pressure groups, public interest/advocacy groups, new social movements, major groups (UN terminology), community/local groups, grassroots organisations, self-help groups, all of which are more recent appearances, and add to the more traditional organisations like trades unions and business associations (also referred to as 'social partners'), registered charities, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and 'stakeholders' as an overarching term with the nowadays wider connotation of having something "at stake", being interested and/or concerned ¹.

"The simplest, most common, meaning given to "civil society" is all public activity, by any individuals, organizations or movements, other than government employees acting in a governmental capacity. In the broadest sense, it encompasses all social, economic, cultural and political relations, but the emphasis is usually on the political aspects of these relations. ... It also clearly goes beyond traditional NGOs to all forms of networks, caucuses and movements." ²

The term 'civil society organisation' (CSO) seems to be – meanwhile - the broadest and most "neutral" one and will be used for this background paper. The main difference to political parties is that CSOs do not seek a mandate, and that parties usually have the constitutionally assigned task to participate in political decision-making. However, political parties have historically developed from movements (or "CSOs"), sometimes then remaining "one-issue parties" ³. Civil society organisations are associated with the following functions:

- *Selection and aggregation:*

The politically/interest oriented organisations have for the state a selection and aggregation function: they bundle individuals' views together in a collective one, which means both selecting important issues as well as aggregating a variety of views on one topic to a view of the association. This serves the individual interest of becoming stronger in a collective, and the state interest of reducing time and effort for gathering views.

¹ The term was originally introduced for "stakeholders" of companies (as important players besides shareholders), and was then widened. At least in the continental European context it is used predominantly in the sense of non-governmental actors as concerned parties,

² Willetts, Peter (2001), Non-Governmental Organizations, in Section 1 Institutional and Infrastructure Resource Issues, Article 1.44.3.7, in Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), Developed under the Auspices of the UNESCO, Eolss Publishers, Oxford, UK, [<http://www.eolss.net>]. <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/CS-NTWKS/NGO-ART.HTM#Part11>

³ Like recently the animal protection party in the Netherlands, which now has two seats in Parliament.

- *Widen the knowledge base and increase legitimacy.*

The state's interest has always also had a notion that it is beneficial for the government to widen the knowledge base and to listen to (groups of) practitioners, firstly in order to improve policies and secondly to help improving implementation, by consulting the concerned parties (the constituency in a wider sense) in the development phase of policies, and through this also improving ownership, as important element of implementation. In modern times, this all is also referred to as improving the legitimacy of policies.

Also from a viewpoint of improving democracy it has been seen as beneficial to allow for, and welcome, participation "beyond the ballot box": It provides for political socialisation, advances ownership and identification, as well as loyalty to the political system. Altogether this gives a legitimacy to CSOs. There are, however, also problems, for example regarding a certain "lobby" practice of economic actors, an internal legitimacy dilemma of NGOs, and, in the international arena, the "abuse of NGOs as legitimacy substitute for the democratic deficits of multi-national organisations" ⁴.

Lobbying could be, and tends to be meanwhile, understood in a broad sense of any attempt of influencing policy-making, done by all CSOs, independent of the type of interest, usually differentiated in individual/economic and "public cause"/altruistic interests. However, there are significant differences in resources available for lobby activities, including professional lobby firms ('Public Affairs' or 'PR') operating for companies, and the influence in many countries, and at the EU level, has increased strongly. ⁵ Business associations, though in a strict sense part of civil society, are in a way positioned in between the spheres market and civil society. Although interest representation and influencing by business interest is seen as a legitimate part of the democratic process, the differences also come with a typical lobby practice that is usually characterised by discreetness, confidentiality and/or secrecy, which also leads to conclusions like "lobbyism is a power without legitimacy" ⁶. It is also seen as problematic that business is given undue weight and privileged access to decision makers. ⁷ Proposals for "democratisation" of lobbying therefore ask for more transparency, e.g. by a register of organisations, rules for politicians, annual reports, and (business) lobbies to give themselves a 'code of conduct'. In this light, also the European Commission in 2006 has started the "Transparency Initiative", aiming at increasing "openness and accessibility of EU institutions, raise awareness over the use of the EU budget and make the Union's institutions more accountable to the public". ⁸

For citizens, participation through a CSO is also beneficial, because CSOs provide for information and analysis of a variety of complex policy matters, which would be difficult for an individual to follow alone. Although providing information is also the task of state organisations, private foundations, and also in many countries of public TV, it is the topic-specific, tailor-made information processing and briefing by CSOs that makes them interesting for citizens.

Pluralist and (neo)corporatist traditions in interest articulation

In the relation between state and civil society/private sector there are different traditions, ranging from more pluralist to what is referred to as (neo)corporatist. These traditions have an influence on the composition and workstyle of SD councils (s. ch. 4.1. below).

In political theory the two paradigms have long been polarised, but overall it could well be argued that they are not opposites, but points of a continuum, or that (neo)corporatism is a sub-

⁴ Schade, Jeanette (2002): [Civil society – a complex debate]. Institute for Development and Peace of the University of Duisburg, INEF Report 59/2002. P.57.

⁵ Leif, Thomas & Speth, Rudolf (2006): [Ten thesis on the anatomy of lobbyism in Germany and six proposals for its democratisation]. In: Leif/Speth (eds.): [The fifth power – lobbyism in Germany], p. 351.

⁶ Leif/Speth, 2006, p. 352.

⁷ Leif/Speth, 2006, p. 13; EEB position paper <<http://www.eeb.org/activities/transparency/g-10-position-220206.pdf>>.

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/kallas/transparency_en.htm> In the Green Paper "European Transparency Initiative" it is also amazing, how confusingly the terms (interest groups, stakeholders, lobby groups) are used, particularly in the translations to other languages (starting from English).

category of pluralistic theory.⁹ Pluralism emphasises the variety of interests, which get organised voluntarily, and political participation is characterised by competition of, assumed conflicting, interests. In corporatism this participation is institutionalised and warranted by the state, with a representation monopoly for selected associations, whereas neocorporatism¹⁰, also referred to as 'liberal' or 'democratic' corporatism, in contrast is also characterised by voluntary forming of associations, but has an emphasis on bargaining between labour (organisations) and the private sector (and government), a bottom-up demand for such arrangements, which at the same time provide a service for the state, and therefore these associations have privileged access to the government¹¹.

Link between civil society participation and policy advice

Another angle to look at in this context is the link between civil society participation and external policy advice (to governments). As outlined above, interest representation in a wider sense is at the core of civil society participation, and increasing the knowledge base of policy makers is a secondary function, which is hence also a kind of policy advice. Traditionally, however, governments ask "independent" scientists and other experts for giving policy advice. This ranges from asking individuals as advisor to a variety of formations, including (expert) councils, enquete-commissions, think-tanks, tailor-made research institutions. The transition between the two poles has become rather seamless, but in principle it could be said that advice by "stakeholders" represents certain interests, whilst original policy advice in the "independent" and "neutral" sense should, if reputable, relate to a wider frame.¹²

The subtle differences and diverse connotations in the countries included in this study, will be discussed in details when it comes to the internal governance of SD councils (see ch. 4.) and their function as 'advisor' and 'agent' (see ch. 3.2 and 5.2).

Figure 1: How can an advice on sustainability issues add to an informed debate?

- Advice integrates ecologic, economic and social criteria of environment and development issues.
- Advice emphasizes process-orientated thinking (as opposed to deliver a silver bullet).
- Involving stakeholders in deliberations of e.g. drafts or fact findings.
- Advice is being publicly communicated.
- Sender is independent from addressee.
- Advice is being followed up by further evaluation and / or feedback loops.
- Councils to provide for some mutual learning schemes.

Involvement of civil society in the EU SD strategy

The new EU SD strategy also includes in its policy guiding principles the aim to enhance the involvement of citizens, businesses and social partners¹³. In its governance chapter it also points out the importance of education for fostering behavioural change and increasing social capital, emphasises the need for communication, mobilising actors and multiplying success,

⁹ For the former e.g. ; Lijphart, Arend (1999): Patterns of democracy. Government forms and performance in 36 countries. New Haven, Yale University Press. For the latter e.g. Sebaldt, Martin & Strassner, Alexander (2004): [Associations in the Federal Republic of Germany]. Wiesbaden. Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften, p. 41.

¹⁰ In classic corporatism the state dictates the establishment of associations, which took place in totalitarian regimes.

¹¹ Leif/Speth, 2006, p.18; Reutter, Werner (2001): [Introduction: Corporatism, pluralism and democracy]. In: Reutter/Ruetters (eds.): [Associations and systems of associations in Western Europe], p.11.

¹² Leif/Speth, 2006, p. 28/29.

¹³ With apparently the role of (individual) businesses is emphasised as "social partners" usually includes trade unions and business associations.

calls upon "business leaders and other key stakeholders ... to engage in urgent reflection with political leaders" and "welcomes civil society initiatives which aim at creating more ownership for sustainable development". For fostering the former a proposal is announced for 2007, and for the latter the EU commits itself to "intensify dialogue with relevant organisations and platforms that can offer valuable advice" (see Box 1).

The degree and way of organisation of civil society varies in different countries. Also, the links between local CSOs and the national and particularly the EU level are generally weak, which also on the civil society side hampers the wish for more vertical integration, for bringing Europe to the people and the other way round. If there is no significant constituency it is also not easy to compose a credible SD council which would then fulfil the task to cumulate and widen the remit of individual CSOs.

It is an ongoing question, what can be done to stimulate and foster self-organisation of civil society in countries with a political culture that has brought this about to a lesser extent. There are peculiar appearances, ranging from one-person NGOs to others not membership based, but mainly funded by project money, which often seem to be rather consultants than a CSO (depending on the projects though). There are also countries (e.g. in southern Europe), where there is lesser tradition for becoming member in a CSO, but the mobilisation potential for individual issues is very high, i.e. another form of direct "participation" and expressing voices exist. Overall, some government funds might be useful to stimulate self-organisation of civil society, but it would probably be useful to monitor whether this leads to engagement of wider circles and hence capacity building.

Councils are likely not set up if there is no call by civil society, or there are formations with governance lead and/or dominance (see ch. 4.1); academia often plays a stronger role in such countries. On the other hand: if set up in situations with limited CSOs, it might be that they become a valuable focal point for spreading civil society engagement.

Box 1 - EU Sustainable Development Strategy, June 2006

POLICY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(selection)

INVOLVEMENT OF CITIZENS

Enhance the participation of citizens in decision-making. Promote education and public awareness of sustainable development. Inform citizens about their impact on the environment and their options for making more sustainable choices.

INVOLVEMENT OF BUSINESSES AND SOCIAL PARTNERS

Enhance the social dialogue, corporate social responsibility and private-public partnerships to foster cooperation and common responsibilities to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

CROSS CUTTING POLICIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

14. Education is a prerequisite for promoting the behavioural changes and providing all citizens with the key competences needed to achieve sustainable development. ...

15. Education can contribute to greater social cohesion and well-being through investments in social capital and by ensuring equal opportunities, citizens' participation especially of disadvantaged groups to achieve a higher degree of awareness and understanding of the complexity and many interdependencies in today's world.

COMMUNICATION, MOBILISING ACTORS AND MULTIPLYING SUCCESS

31. Business leaders and other key stakeholders including workers' organisations and nongovernmental organisations should engage in urgent reflection with political leaders on the medium- and long-term policies needed for sustainable development and propose ambitious business responses which go beyond existing minimum legal requirements. A proposal to foster this process will be made by the Commission in 2007. In accordance with the European Alliance for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), awareness and knowledge of corporate social and environmental responsibility and accountability should be increased.

32. The EU welcomes civil society initiatives which aim at creating more ownership for sustainable development and will therefore intensify dialogue with relevant organisations and platforms that can offer valuable advice by drawing attention to the likely impact of current policies on future generations. In this context, the EU will also continue to promote full implementation of the Aarhus Convention Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

2. Sustainable Development Councils (SDCs): coming into being

The Brundtland Commission was the first to introduce the idea of establishing national Councils or ombudsmen, underlining "making informed choices" (chapter 11), and with this the participation of the private sector, science and civil society organisations (then: NGOs).¹⁴ But whereas the Commission advocated this with the purpose of representation of interests of present and future generations, the SD councils established nowadays tend to not follow the idea of a formal representation.

Also the Agenda 21 stresses the importance of engagement of society and involvement of what was there defined as 'major groups' in SD policies and processes. Stimulated by this call, national governments have established SD councils.¹⁵ Whilst the Agenda 21 also had a concept of a more formal representation, most of the SD councils as we know them today rather follow the aspiration of fostering dialogue for SD among stakeholders, and between stakeholders and government, as well as monitoring progress and encouraging initiatives.

Figure 2: Important elements in setting up a national SD Council

- Nomination (ad personam appointment of eminent persons with background in SD and its dimensions)
- Facilitation (secretariat, staff, budget, outsourcing capacities)
- Capacity (independence in agenda setting, recommendations and advice on its own right, capacity of initiative and freedom of manoeuvre)
- Output (reporting back to Government, linking to Government body responsible for drafting, coordinating and implementing the National SD Strategy)
- Learning (setting up mutual learning structures and new institutional arrangements)

In Europe the call of Agenda 21 fell on grounds of already existing participatory practice and mechanisms or institutions for policy advice.¹⁶ In some countries, such as UK and Germany, there were scientific advisory councils for environmental and related policies, preparing advice in a more academic way.¹⁷ In both cases a stakeholder oriented SD council was created in addition. Some countries with a social partner tradition (often institutionalised as social-economic council), some of which also already had policy advisory councils (e.g. the Netherlands, Ireland), either established an SD council in addition, with this special remit (e.g. Belgium, Ireland, later also Austria), or created, in parts temporary, bodies for certain tasks¹⁸. Most of the existing policy advisory bodies have taken up the SD challenge by re-adjusting, but not changing their mission. Other countries "were able" to start from scratch and created

¹⁴ Discussing how the legal rights of (future) generations could be secured, it says: "... the wide variation in national legal systems and practices makes it impossible to propose an approach that would be valid everywhere. Some countries have amended their basic laws or constitution; others ... may wish to consider the designation of a national council or public representative or 'ombudsman' to represent the interests and rights of present and future generations" (Chapter 12, paragraph 84).

¹⁵ In some developing countries however, these initiatives have over time in quite a few cases stalled again, for reasons of governance and politics. One practical factor has supposedly been that councils have been overloaded with tasks and capacity building has not followed. Also the fact that these councils, as novel institutions, unavoidably operate in a kind of "trial and error" mode, contributed to petering out or termination. This experience is valuable everywhere, when establishing remits and modes of operation of SD councils.

¹⁶ For overviews see Niestroy (2005): Sustaining Sustainability – a benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states. EEAC series, Background study No.2. Lemma, Utrecht; Niestroy (2005): The network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC), elni review 1/2005: 53-60.

¹⁷ As reaction to Agenda 21 Germany first continued with its expert advice tradition and established a "Scientific advisory council for global change".

¹⁸ E.g. Sweden a Commission for Local Agenda 21, the Netherlands a body for improving development aid, which is called national SD commission (NCDO).

councils for SD and/or environment, with the advising and/or increasing involvement task (e.g. Portugal, Hungary, France, Spain, Slovenia, Croatia). Finland was the only country that did not follow the model of an independent SD council, but the model of a platform for dialogue between government and stakeholders, and the government coordination task in one (see ch. 4.1). This was later followed by some accession countries, of which nowadays the council in the Czech Republic still seems to operate ¹⁹.

3. Tasks and capacities of SD Councils

In general, for *SD strategies and policies* the following capacities can be identified:

- Long-term vision and principles, and giving a long-term perspective and framework for SD initiatives and investment,
- Political and societal leadership (i.e. government, parliament, organised civil society and private sector),
- Coordination of government policies (overall strategy and sectoral strategies and policies),
- Stimulating and fostering the involvement and engagement of civil society, communicating SD, encouraging and bringing together the range of activities,
- Mechanisms to address and resolve conflict of opinions and interests,
- Organising learning processes.

These mechanisms may be organised and assigned differently in different countries, i.e. various institutional arrangements are conceivable and do exist.

However, some of the tasks itemised above are internal to government, in particular the coordination of policies and giving a framework, some are to be done by government as well as civil society and the private sector (leadership, long-term perspective, conflict resolution, organising learning processes), and some are more on the societal side (stimulating further involvement), which may be supported and/or also done by governments.

In combination with the knowledge and advisory aspect as addressed above (ch. 1.) this distribution of capacities is reflected in the *missions of SD councils*, which may be summarised under the headers Policy advice (3.1), Agent/Dialogue facilitation (3.2) and Communication/Stimulating involvement (3.3). For each of these capacities three facets may be distinguished, though they clearly overlap: an internal component, i.e. relating to everything that happens within the council, an intermediate sphere, i.e. all activities that derive from their position between government/state and society and their freedom to address, discuss with and involve all Ministries and other institutions at all levels, as well as an external component referring to reaching out to a wider audience, both in communicating and in involving.

The following Table 1 illustrates the capacities of councils by highlighting their “core” dimensions (in bold).

¹⁹ The Czech Council is fittingly called "Government Council for SD", and has a composition of around 50/50 government and stakeholder/academics. The "Government Council for SD" of the Slovak Republic in contrast is "the key government coordination mechanism", (almost) exclusively composed of government and state agency members, with a "Working group for SD", where also non-governmental actors are meant to be included.

Table 1: Summary of the key capacities of (SD) councils and the overlapping facets

	Advice	Agent	Communication
Internal	Agenda setting (5.1)	Internal processes and work style: How to get to advice (4.2)	Decisions on communication strategy and actions
Intermediate	<u>Discussion with other parties during the process of preparing advice (5.2)</u>	Council members to cover the span between their organizations and deliberations in council (5.2)	(e.g. designing a consultation process with other parties)
External	<i>Communicating and discussing final advice (5.3)</i>	Council members carry joint views into their organization; Discussion with other parties during the process of preparing advice (5.2)	All communication activities (beyond discussing advice) (5.3)

3.1 Giving policy advice

Councils are established to give advice to their government on SD policies, usually (also) related to the national/regional SD strategy. This task stands to the background of a desired increase of the knowledge base for policy making. Similar to classical expert councils the more societal oriented councils also provide for knowledge transfer from science to policy making, as advice is meant to be evidence based and scientific input is sought. With the emphasis on civil society views in the councils though, governments do not listen to a "pure" scientific knowledge brought together in an interdisciplinary way, but to a politically processed essence of societal knowledge and expertise, which broadly falls under the notion of transdisciplinarity.

Advice is primarily, but not exclusively, directed to the government, and also includes an involvement in monitoring the national SDS. All councils in the EU may give own initiative advice (on top of the advice explicitly requested by governments). In some countries governments are obliged to request advice, and also to answer to the recommendations.

Councils usually give input during the strategy development, comment on progress reports, sometimes by involving wider circles, for example by organising workshops etc. Advice is given on any policies considered as important and/or contentious. With this Councils are able to show a kind of political leadership and

- keep the overall issue on the agenda and fill it with seriousness, get others to act (see also below),
- are reminders of the integrated and/or "holistic" view and the long-term perspective, and with this better able to identify forgotten or neglected issues, and finally they are
- able to reply to issues raised by the government, tackling contentious policy issues, hot topics, that may prepare and/or add extra value to government's engagement.

Agenda setting as the internal component is key for the advisory capacity, and stands for the above introduced "selection function" for governments, while dialogue with institutions during the phase of developing an advice is the intermediate component, as a core part of the agent capacity (see 3.2), and discussing the final advice is the external component, part of the communication task (see 3.3).

Currently these steps are predominantly being taken separately. However, there is apparently a trend that tries to combine all three steps or "facets" into what could be perceived as an advisory "learning loop". In that sense, the communication task would collect reflections and soundings on the effectiveness of the original advice, and would lay grounds for the council to possibly fine tune the previous advice or add new items.

3.2 Acting as agent and facilitator

Getting to joint advice is obviously preceded by debate in the council and processes for achieving agreements, which is in itself a manner of mutual learning and hence capacity building, also referred to as (building of) social capital. The council with this acts as an agent²⁰ for dialogue among societal stakeholders, between sectors, organisations and interests, usually in combination with scientific input, and this more actively and involved than what would be understood by facilitator.

There is an internal process aspect to this function (see ch. 4.2), but the main effect of stimulating deliberation, crossing borders and horizons, getting out of trenches is the intermediate component, which is in fact the core of an SD council's existence and makes it rather unique: the vision and assumption, that stakeholder dialogue "among one another", in a certain style of provided openness, bears a potential for innovative thoughts, ideas, approaches, proposals etc. It creates a "unique selling position", and if a meaningful joint opinion is achieved, this adds some weight to the recommendations.

This situation hence provides for a kind of "higher level" aggregation of knowledge and opinions (compared to the aggregating of individual CSOs). The face-to-face deliberation is a value added to the concept of civil society. For civil society the regular way of addressing the public opinion is via stirring up the media, providing meaningful images and going for the headlines rather than marked by consensus building in face-to-face experience. This is an achievement of open and democratic societies. Councils are adding value to this by opening an additional field of opinion making, which can be of great value when highly complex matters and so-called "unstructured problems" such as burden sharing for climate action or change of production and consumption patterns are at stake.

Councils also elaborate and display to government and society either possible compromise/consensus lines and/or the conflict lines in society, - the former with a potential of them going beyond what may be achieved in - more "political" – negotiating.

With this, they are a "one shop one stop" contact point for the civil society angle on SD for the government and other actors (e.g. also from outside the country). It does not replace consulting with individual organisations, but it is effective to have in one place the key views brought together. This also applies the other way round (see ch. 4.1).

Relating to the agenda setting capacity, it is also beneficial to have civil society together in an SD council, because individual organisations usually do not have "SD" as their figurehead, and often also not on their agenda: besides historical reasons, probably because the field and approach is not distinct enough for providing a good profile for a CSO.²¹

The external component of the agent capacity is, if and when council members carry views concluded in the council to their own organisation and elsewhere ("snowball effect" in a wider sense), and if councils invites other organisations already when preparing an advice, which includes government units and other levels (regional, local), and involving different Ministries in projects. Councils try to overcome deadlocks of each party passing the buck to another, trying to build up critical mass and "tidal power" for issues.

3.3 Communication and stimulating involvement

Besides inherent communication activities, around half of the councils have explicit tasks to

- communicating SD issues with CSOs/multipliers and into the wider public, and/or
- improving the involvement of civil society and CSOs, by stimulating debate as well as initiating and fostering projects and stimulating related activities.

This capacity is clearly almost only external, with some internal aspects like agreeing on a communication strategy, and in parts also intermediate, for example when it comes to designing a consultation process.

²⁰ "Agent" means that a council is neither a negotiator nor mediator of interests and positions (in terms of arbitrating disputes), nor a mere facilitator or moderator of dialogue.

²¹ Such experience was for example made in the Netherlands' peer review (cf. Background report 2006: http://www.rmno.nl/files_content/Rmno%201207%20Peer_4.pdf, plus Annex on civil society).

As councils are meant to be visible bodies, it is in their interest to make the outcomes and pieces of advice available to a broader audience, in order to stimulate informed debate. The former therefore is done in all cases implicitly, as part of the wider remit, with a range of means (website, publications, newsletters etc.), with the internet also as general means to address a wider public. More explicitly councils invite (key) governmental and political actors, scientific experts, other CSOs to the council and organise workshops, conferences etc. Councils try to foster high-level commitment by inviting Ministers, Parliamentarians and business leaders to internal council meetings and public events.

Council members, and often predominantly the chair and director, give presentations on councils' advice and related topics. If the communication task is formulated more explicitly, councils are able to spend more capacity, to be more pro-active and to experiment with further means for political communication. Triggering engagement and snowball effects like this is the preferred means for addressing a wider public, and not by means of mass communication (for example advertisement campaigns as in commercial communication).

How councils fulfil these capacities in practice will be illustrated and discussed further below (ch. 5.). First, some insight in the compositions of SDCs should be gained (4.1), as it has an impact on this "how to" and the work style, in particular on the internal aspects of getting to joint advice and decisions (4.2).

4. Internal governance

4.1 Composition of the councils

All advisory councils are composed to provide for inter- and transdisciplinarity, i.e. they have both members from different scientific disciplines and members with a "non-governmental" background in the broader sense (civil society and private sector). For councils where the notion of societal involvement dominates, the composition is meant to more or less "mirror" society²². "Mirror", because it is predominantly not understood in a more strict representational sense. With this concept, and the desired capacities introduced above (in particular 'advice', increasing the knowledge base and 'agent'), a "multi-stakeholder" composition means societal stakeholders as members. This applies to the vast majority of advisory (SD) councils in Europe, which also have a political and institutional independence, i.e. a real capacity to provide critical and independent advice regardless of the government's official position. Also, the desired dialogue among stakeholders that is supposed to overcome "tunnel views" etc.²³ requires a space for openness, which is usually better achievable in a non-governmental setting.

It exists also a more negative connotation of "independence", namely that such a position leads to being too far from what is relevant for policy making.²⁴ Whether this might occur depends on several variables in the institutional fabric. At the end of the day, it is not in the interest of a council, to work on an issue with predominantly academic and less policy relevance, - if only that this likely leads, sooner or later, to a termination. Regarding the nomination of council members, too much focus on academic members might not be favourable.

A good mixture of requested advice and own initiative advice could be beneficial, whilst a situation of being "snowed in" with requests for comments on a range of detailed legislation is also not a way to success. Councils are not to be reduced to a type of "expert commission" mandated to resolve singular policy issues "technically". Instead, the task to "integrate the silos" is a constant challenge, as is the task to push the public debate on an informed level. To ensure an informed debate usually means to provide evidence-based insight and to bring scientific expertise into the decision making scheme.

²² In some languages it is said (...personalities from) "public life" (e.g. German), and in others "societal middlefield" (e.g. Dutch).

²³ An expression in French is "avoir le nez dans le guidon", which literally means "to have the nose on the handlebars".

²⁴ "Ivory tower", "talking shops" or similar.

If a council was rather reluctantly installed, or a new government has a different attitude towards a council than the one that established it, especially high quality of work, time and experience is required to gain reputation with advice that is useful for governments. Building on relationships with senior civil servants is usually a way to build on some continuity.

Council members (CMs) are always appointed by governments. The nomination and appointment procedures vary, ranging from public "job" advertisements and a shortlist prepared by a certain commission (e.g. NL, UK), to nominations by respective groups of CSOs (e.g. B, IRE), to a strictly Cabinet-level decision by government (e.g. Germany). The size of councils ranges from 10 to up to 50 members, with a weighted average of around 20-25.

Regarding representativeness there are different views and traditions, also in parts reflected in the nomination and appointment procedure of council members, which is reflected in different compositions and how the link of the council members to their background is perceived:

Council Members are appointed

- as representatives of CSOs²⁵, which could be called "mandated representation"; this type usually also has academic CMs, which do not "represent", and are also perceived in a way as "de-polarizing" the debate,
- ad personam, but being appointed for having a senior position in a CSO, the private sector or similar (academia is usually also included), with the idea, that a CM is "allowed" to deliberate freely, but that his/her provenance is in the back of the mind, which could be called "soft representation",
- ad personam, as experts for the dimensions and aspects of SD, with some balance of provenance sought, but a more direct link to civil society done in other ways (e.g. by installing a large "SD panel" or otherwise more or less systematically involving civil society organisations/representatives in the debate).

The former two stand for the idea that already via the council's membership links to civil society should be provided, i.e. assuming that the CMs have a "resonating room", where ideas developed in the council may spread (see ch. 3.2 and 4.2).

Countries with a more neocorporatist tradition tend to create a council of the first type, particularly if they have already a social-economic council, which is made up like this (e.g. the Belgian Federal FRDO-CFDD and the Flemish Minaraad; similar also the Spanish CAMA).

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is also established in this tradition, and has a much larger membership than SD councils, which is also due to the EU level situation, with all member states being eligible to seat numbers according to the size of the country.

In other cases such countries have deliberately moved from this version to a more expert model for a council, which might partially also be the case because the social partners feel not entirely inclined to participate in an SD council (e.g. Austria). Catalonia's decree for SD governance provides both for an advisory SD council (CADS) with an expert composition and a "societal council for SD" with a CSO composition; the latter has so far not come into being. Ireland and Portugal with a similar tradition have moved for their SD councils 'Comhar' and 'CNADS' to a more soft representational composition and style (though the number of "representatives" of certain groups is an issue). The Hungarian OKT has an interesting model of a three-part composition: one third from the private sector (including business associations), one third from (environmental) NGOs and one third from academia, with the chair rotating between these groups from term to term.

The German RNE is a clear example for the notion of "soft representation", similar also the French CNDD, but all in all, most SD councils lean to this perception, and to operating this way, including that council members are appointed 'ad personam'. The UK SD Commission tends to emphasise that members stand for 'aspects/dimensions of SD' and are not appointed as 'stakeholders'²⁶.

²⁵ Having members from individual companies tends to be considered odd in these cases, whilst not unusual in the others.

²⁶ This might relate to the Anglo-Saxon origin of "stakeholder-thinking", which tends to have the notion of lobbying of "conventional groups", i.e. large associations, in contrast to a broader variety of civil society and CSOs.

The developments in Belgium and the Netherlands are interesting to illustrate an apparent underlying striving towards this rather distinctive perception of representativeness, link to civil society and related work-style. Both countries have a long-established social-economic council. The Netherlands in addition has had for long an elaborated system of policy advisory councils. Those were traditionally also set up as "stakeholder" bodies ("Polder model"), but in a reform of this system in 1997 the new, or re-established, councils were set up as expert bodies. This situation is still underlined, but over time the councils that encompass SD have appointed more societal and e.g. communication "experts". The Belgian stakeholder SD council (FRDO-CFDD) considers negotiating as a means for building trust and social cohesion. However, it the council has successfully worked over the years on shifting the internal work-style towards creating more space for deliberation.²⁷

In relation to their governments the concepts of councils may strike the balance between "not too close and not too distant" differently. In general, it is beneficial for the government to have a kind of "one shop one stop" for civil society views with an SD council, and for a council it is favourable if there is a coordination mechanism on the government side, which is in the same way not the exclusive contact. Aside from this general prerequisite, councils throughout Europe follow different lines of political culture:

- Soft links:

In some countries there are government representatives as observers in the council. In other countries, there are other ways of steady contacts (see below).

- Embedded Councils:

A special type of "council" is the "embedded council", which is government lead and/or dominated by government: These bodies are more or less a government coordination body with stakeholder involvement. The agent capacity, with civil society dialogue "among each other", and getting to joint advice, is not provided, or to a lesser extent – depending on details of the composition and the internal life, which also depends on how much Ministries steer the meetings' preparation etc. In principle, the views presented to government remain those of individual CSOs, and/or some ad-hoc overlap might occur in discussion. The conflict and compromise lines likely remain fragmented. Overall, such councils are rather a dialogue platform for CSOs and the government, or it has the aim to come to joint agreements.

- Independent Councils:

For the "independent" councils dialogue with government comes on top of their work and takes place in various ways: in bilateral meetings with e.g. working group chairs, by inviting operative units to certain agenda points of council meetings on a regular basis, and by steady contacts of the secretariats.

Having leadership for SD "at the highest level" has been concluded as probably the best arrangement at several occasions during the past years. For independent councils this is best provided if they are linked to the PM's office, which means that this office is responsible, the primary contact, and the council reports to it. A term of the council that overlaps government cycles, including the chair, is a typical means to provide for stability: It gives this (still) existing council the opportunity to make SD strong to a new incoming government.

An overview of the different types and capacities of councils is displayed in Annex 1. Table 2 summarises the differences between independent and embedded councils.

²⁷ The so-called "mutual gains approach (MGA)", invented by Harvard University, was mentioned here.

Table 2: Types of SD Councils: Differences between embedded and independent councils and what they have in common

Embedded Councils (in the sense of having the heads of Government as regular members of council)	both	Independent Councils (in the sense of having exclusively members from civil society, private sector, and/or local policy level)
Sender is partly identical with addressee. Immediate administrative response possible, for example regarding implementation of advice	Ad persona or representative appointment Eminent persons Promoting SD Building bridges in political culture Fostering public debate	Addressing Government as "critical friend" Addressing partners within government; outreach to groups outside Government (Watchdog-function)

If lead by the Prime Minister, the government councils typically find it advantageous that this leads to high political attention and keeps the SD topic on the agenda. It is also perceived as positive that civil society actors share the table with Ministers as equal members of the council, and get immediate responses from government. Being chaired by the Prime Minister has, however, in practice only materialised in Finland. A government lead may also cause the opposite, namely losing the long-term perspective, if a new government drops the issue, or reshuffles leadership arrangements, including to moving "down" responsibility (e.g. in the Netherlands).

Creating an independent council tends to be a stronger signal for taking civil society input seriously, at least if the relationship to the government is set up and performed in a satisfactory way; the opposite would be an independent council that operates somewhere far away from government and policy making.

An "embedded" model has been used in countries where there is a strong tradition of cooperation between government and civil society (e.g. some of the Nordic countries). It might also be useful in countries where civil society is not (yet) well developed. On the other hand, a government lead/dominance might then just *not* stimulate a self-organising, as the government continues to dominate. Such a situation likely occurs in parallel with a government's attitude that is rather reluctant regarding CS involvement and/or a public sector with a rather state centred, and/or elitist, governance style. However, governments need to establish internal mechanisms for policy coordination. This task differs from those of SD councils. In countries where an "embedded" model is considered as useful, the dialogue among civil society members, including getting to joint positions, could be improved by establishing a substructure of e.g. working groups, which are only composed of civil society members, or government members as observers only. Such subgroups could give joint advice to government (and other actors). If an embedded model strives for agreements between government and civil society, i.e. beyond dialogue, problems might occur in two ways: a) It is difficult to select CSOs regarding representativeness, and b) CSOs tend to not appreciate such a setting, as it diminishes their individual political manoeuvring space too much.

4.2 How to get to joint advice

Getting to joint positions and advice (and other decisions) lies in the heart of a council's being, and is – as elaborated above – part of the agent capacity.

Its internal implications are the processes "how to" get to joint positions. Obviously, the more "representative" a council is set up the more difficult it might be to achieve this: the representational type tends to imply more a negotiating style, and at the other end of the spectrum experts might be in an easier position regarding agreements as they are not made accountable, in contrast to the mandated versions. The most typical "soft representation" lies in between, and also faces challenges in between.

In practice, there are three options to deal with controversial situations in the council (and in all similar situations where agreements are aimed at):

- The advice is dropped, or parts of it, or the whole issue is taken off the agenda: Either of this has occurred in a few cases across the countries studied;
- The smallest common denominator is agreed upon: No council chooses for this option, as it would tend to be a rather "empty" advice, whilst they strive for "meaningful" advice;
- The minority opinion is reported, usually following a vote: Although all councils aim for consensus, this is in most cases regarded as the second best option; in some cases also regarded as positive, as it shows the range of conflict to the government. However, it is also clear that if this occurred in the majority of cases, the relevance and added value of a council would become doubtful. Only few councils so far have used this option. In those cases the number of advice endorsed this way range from a few to up to 1/3.

This attitude confirms in an inductive way what was already be explored theoretically: Advisory SD councils have an aggregation function for the government, above the aggregation provided by individual CSOs. However, how councils perceive and handle the aim and process of "converging" shows that it is not seen as a "must" to achieve agreements, and that it is not done on the expense of the result.

At the core of an SD council is the position of council members, at least in the 'soft representation' model: In the council they have the chance and challenge to cover the span between their background and/or organisation and the demand in the council for open deliberation "beyond borders", - an opportunity that is not offered in the traditional political arm wrestling of day-to-day interest representation. This is what makes SD councils unique. A council member is allowed by its home organisation to act in this way, and with this the council member may extend and go beyond original views, but still has the organisation he/she comes from in the back of the mind and works along a subtle line of how far extension may go.

The internal process in the councils depends a bit on the tradition and (discussion) style of a country, but overall the challenge, and work-in-progress, could be put as: "Trying to understand how a controversial style of debate could be transformed into a mutual comprehensive learning without circumventing or fading out the contrariness of issues."

One issue handled differently and occasionally discussed is whether there is voting or not. Besides the mandated representative councils, where voting is normal (as well as displaying the minority opinion), voting is usually provided by the internal rules, but not practiced. This is either because it has not been "needed" yet, and/or the council hesitates to really apply this means as it might move the overall style in the councils away from the original aim of finding consensus. For striking a balance, applying a "sounding vote" or a "poll" are means in practice, as well as "sounding" in case of issues beyond formal decision-making.

There are some variables supporting such a process:

- A key variable is the capability of the chair to moderate the discussion. The council's chair is in all cases underlined as in general very important.
- Another variable is the setting in a council meeting (and in the preparation phase): In one case council members were originally allowed to be accompanied by assistants from the home organisation. At least in this case a fundamental controversy in the council lead to a situation where council members found themselves "controlled" by their organisation. Institutional interest and positional self-interest dominated over a creative

process that would have been able to produce new solution. With this dominance it was not possible to solve the gridlock on the issue and the discussion ended in dissent. The respective council was then rethinking the way of operating, and the formal arrangement was changed with good results.

In another council the academic members are asked to chair the Working Groups, which has lead to a kind of rationalising the debate. Working Groups are in general required to have more in-depth discussions and prepare a topic. A "bureau" made up of a small number of council members might be needed as conflict resolution and steering mechanism, particularly in larger councils.

- Experimenting with other methods for dialogue and discussion is also recommendable as well as working on the "corporate identity" of the council.
- Self-evaluation is most likely a good idea, for example when a term ends and/or a considerably new number of council members change, or at mid-term: It provides for reflection on the work, work-style, output, focus, and possibly effect. It is often useful to involve an external party (e.g. consultant) for such an evaluation, and might be needed if there are already conflicts, and/or where it is felt that council members need to express very freely their personal opinion on internal affairs.

4.3 Practical aspects

Councils are in administrative terms typically linked to a government body, be it a Ministry or an agency, and/or so-called project-executing organisation (which could be a semi-private organisation, a research institute or similar). *None of the investigated councils has an own legal personality. They have different degrees of rights to determine expenses.

Resources / budget size

Budgets and resources provided for councils vary significantly, and range from around 100.000€ to more than the tenfold, without a clear relation to e.g. the level of prices in a country. Clearly, the tasks assigned to councils are open-ended, regarding what can be done and spent. However, experience of councils across Europe show that a certain minimum in work and output requires a certain minimum in resources.

As a minimum it could be roughly defined that a council should meet around 5 times per year with respective outcomes, which usually also requires some kind of working group mechanisms. These activities need to be prepared and followed-up, both on the content and the administrative side. This requires a few staff members.

Nine out of 15 councils have a budget above 0,5 mio €, which includes also the UK SDC with an exceptionally high budget in comparison (and staff size, see below). These councils are also, as much as this can be stated qualitatively, more active and productive.

Expenses

The following categories of expenses can be identified:

1. Secretariat: staff, material costs, housing;
2. Council members: travel costs, attendance money, other;
3. Programme money: conferences, communication, research, projects (as defined above, plus seed money projects).

As there are different ways to set up budget lines, comparisons are however not really straightforward. Item 3 for example was separated in order to identify the portion of the budget spent for outreach activities, and particular communication. But in this summarised fashion it then turned out that this item also includes in some cases money spent for outsourcing policy and/or research work (which is elsewhere done by staff, which is then typically a larger number). The figures pulled together are hence ultimately not entirely conclusive.

Also for the council members the category attendance money is not defined clearly enough: it obviously depends on the number of council meetings and other activities done for the council (e.g. giving presentations), it might be daily allowance, or attendance money in the more typical

sense. In this respect the level of payment ranges, and in some cases also only some council members (e.g. NGOs) receive a payment, whereas others do not. The latter then relates to the overall government attempts to support CSOs (here: in the more narrow sense of NGOs).

All in all: Council members usually get travel expenses reimbursed (if not covered by the home organisation). In most cases they, or some, also receive some reimbursement for their time spent in and for the council, but the working time as such seems to be predominantly either covered by the home organisation, or is voluntary and not compensated. For putting more emphasis on outreach this situation seems to cause bottlenecks, beyond the general one that council members per definition have limited time capacity they may spend for the council.

Staff size ranges from one to 20 with a weighted average of about 8.²⁸ The number of staff in relation to the budget depends on details of the organisation of the secretariat, including how much is done there, and how much is outsourced.

The UK SDC is an exception with a staff size of meanwhile more than 70 (starting with 13 in 2003), which corresponds to the much wider remit than other councils have.

Under material costs a non-streamlined difference in the collected data is whether housing is provided or not; in the former case it does not appear in the budget and in the latter case it may amount to up to 0,1 mio €.

The percentage of resources spent for projects and communication ranges roughly from 5 – 50% of the total budget, and tends to relate to the size of the overall budget, but not entirely. There are councils of the group with a higher budget that spend "only" 10-15% of their budget on communication. One clear influence factor here is, whether and how explicitly communication is included in the remits of the council.

Overall, the task of fostering the involvement of civil society exists to a lower extent than one might have expected: for only on half of the councils this is made an explicit task. It might be a recommendable further step in setting up and improving councils, which at the same time requires adequate capacity and resources, particularly as all agent and communication activities tend to be more resource intensive than the mere advising task (which includes, as outlined, the agent function at least within the council). To which extent council members themselves can be more involved in outreach activities needs to be further explored along the lines of their time constraints and reimbursement practice.

All in all, as any other small organisation councils tend to be highly productive compared to larger organisations including the ones of government. This is also or mainly due to the fact that council members in tendency provide their capacity and networks for an in general very low fee.

Reserved rights to determine expenses

Another key practical variable with in some cases significant impacts on the work is the reserved rights to determine expenses. In most cases councils do have that right, with a reservation by the government to approve expenses above a certain amount. Where councils need to apply for each expense, operations get quite cumbersome.

This item also applies to the question of hiring staff at own discretion. In many cases there is a practice of seconding staff from government departments (or other bodies where the council is linked to in administrative terms). It might be a usual practice in countries where staff is moved on a regular basis in general (e.g. UK). It might be more an underlying, subtle or clear strive of the respective government organisation, as there is everywhere the tendency or requirement to reduce staff. In cases where a council is forced to take over staff from government organisations, typically the one to which it is linked to in administrative terms, this might cause a bias, or other undesired effects of staff that is more bound to the originating department than to the independent task of a council.

²⁸ This excludes councils that are clearly understaffed according to the minimum definition suggested above. The UK SDC with a very dynamic staff development over the last years is assumed here with a staff size of 20, which applied until approximately 2005.

5. Approaches and means for action

5.1 Giving policy advice

All councils prepare advice, on strategies, programs, policies and processes, and with this they are all involved and give recommendations on the national SD strategies, most more or less on own initiative also recommend on the EU SDS, or intend to do. This applies to both developing a strategy and progress reports and/or, for example developing indicators.

The number of pieces of advice per year depends obviously on the level of detail addressed in an advice, the broadness of the process, the capacity of a council and secretariat, and ranges overall between a few and up to 50. A variable is here, whether, and if so, how, civil society is already involved in the process of the council's advice forming: either by inviting experts, civil society, and/or by discussing a draft opinion with a wider audience. For national/regional SD strategies (and in some cases the EU SDS) governments often conduct a public consultation, which might be accompanied by a council's action, or the council stimulated this and included it for example in its contribution to the strategy development or progress reports.

Most of the councils have more emphasis on the government side, but in principle all pieces of advice are publicly available and sometimes also addressed to other actors (see ch. 5.3).

'Joint fact finding' is key when developing an advice: Besides the expertise of their own council members, councils involve more, or more specific, expert opinions and use scientific studies, in order to ensure evidence based decisions and recommendations of the council. As regards working methods, usually the secretariat prepares drafts for working group and council's plenary meetings; some councils apply a 'rapporteur'-method, i.e. one council member (the working group chair) "holds the pen".

Given the nature of SD, the integration need and better linking different policies is usually tackled in advice, as well as by triggering cross-cutting arrangements, for example inter-ministerial working groups. Also, different policy levels are given attention in advice and organising dialogue with actors of different levels.

Setting the own agenda, i.e. deciding for the issues to deal with, is a challenge in itself: Besides the input of council members themselves "horizon scanning" or other means might be used for identifying strategic, forgotten, neglected or burning issues. The decision-making in the council then depends on internal and external factors. Regarding the latter some councils "dare" to a lesser extent to putting finger in wounds, to provide a kind of stress and manage to handle it, but most are aware of this need. Learning potentials hence exist among councils (as some are, for example, dedicated to controversial issues). This also applies to the relationship to the government. There is of course a balance to strike within the council, an assessment of what can be achieved jointly, and also what is politically challenging, and feasible at the same time. Not rarely, governments appreciate if a council tackles hot topics. In the end the challenge is about keeping SD highly visible, and at the same time filling it with seriousness, and both about identifying windows of opportunity and opening up the agenda. Some councils have an annual conference, whose topic – and sometimes related advice of the council – is then a selection of prime relevance.

The quality of advice is one key to gain reputation in the government ("to be heard and requested"). This applies always for the early times of a council's existence, and is usually over time expected as a matter of course. Then typically more emphasis is given to the outreach aspect to broadening the basis and adding value.

Examples

□ Priority fields of the national SDS

Councils typically address priority fields of the national SDS, assist in implementing it with recommendations covering individual topics in a wider context. Examples include:

- Unsustainable Trends in Austria (2006), SD strategies in the EU and Options for Underpinning them in the National Parliaments (2006), FORUM (A);
- Seminar and report on Sustainability Impact Assessment (2006), FRDO-CFDD (B);
- World agriculture trade and SD (2003), Forest management as a model for SD (2004), More value for land use - the 30-ha goal (2004), RNE (D);
- National system of SD indicators (2005), CNADS (P); several recommendations on developing a national SD strategy, OKT (HUN) and CNADS (P);
- Mobility and the Transport Infrastructure Plan, CADS (Catalonia);
- Sustainable transport (2007), Unlocking the power sector (2007), SDC (UK).

□ Agenda setting and hot topics/contentious issues:

- Framework opinion on making mobility compatible with SD (2004), FRDO-CFDD (B);
- CSR (2006), FRDO-CFDD (B) and RNE (D);
- Perspectives of coal in a sustainable energy industry (2003), Renewables and climate goals (2001), RNE (D);
- Water management and Strategic Impact Assessment (2007), OKT (HUN);
- Sustainability in the budget (2006), Sustainability in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 - Capital investment in key sectoral areas (2006), Comhar (IRE);
- Sustainable development of tourism (2006), Willingly and knowingly (2000), RMNO (NL);
- Energy policy (2006), Transport (2005), GMOs (2005), CNADS (P);
- Decoupling (2002), Resilience (2002), Strategies for energy efficiency in buildings (2004) and in the transport sector (2006), Sustainable fisheries (2006), Economic growth and the environment in a global perspective (2007), MVB (S);
- The Role of Nuclear Power in a Low Carbon Economy (2006, with eight plus six detailed papers, and a follow-up 2007), Redefining prosperity (2003, followed by several debates), Aviation and the environment; using economic instruments (2003), SDC (UK).

□ Cooperating with others

- Advice together with the socio-economic council, Minaraad (B) and CNADS (P, on GMOs);
- Advice together with the Health council (2007) on nature and health, RMNO and RLG (NL);
- Seminars together with the Swedish Defense Commission, MVB (S);
- Forming a Sustainable Consumption Roundtable (SCR) as joint initiative between the National Consumer Council and the SDC, SDC (UK).

Wrapping up

All depends again on where a country stands: If it is lagging in environmental policy and/or has no SD strategy yet, it is very valuable if a council puts some pressure behind this by giving advice on respective policy fields and/or governance. The more the environmental problems have become mainly a matter of environmental policy integration into sectoral policies and/or have converted towards the "persistent" ones, the more such challenges, usually of higher complexity, need to be tackled by councils. This applies in the same way for the "overarching" SD challenge, which is then usually broken down to topics/aspects where in principle all dimensions of SD are covered, but the focus lies on two or a few. Councils should exemplify for key policy fields how the policy framework needs to be guided by SD principles.

Usually it is appreciated if an advice creates attention: For example, if a meaningful agreement between CSOs is achieved on a topic that used to be contentious. It is one key added value of

councils to try to work on these topics that are "at the edge", or forgotten, neglected, or politically (so far) not really interesting or selling etc. All in all: to be a frontrunner and use the agenda setting role and "calling power".

This also applies for the agenda setting itself: It might be that an agreement in the council is not the most difficult part, but communicating the topic (see the following ch. 5.2. and 5.3), or that the government side remains reluctant although CSOs have agreed.

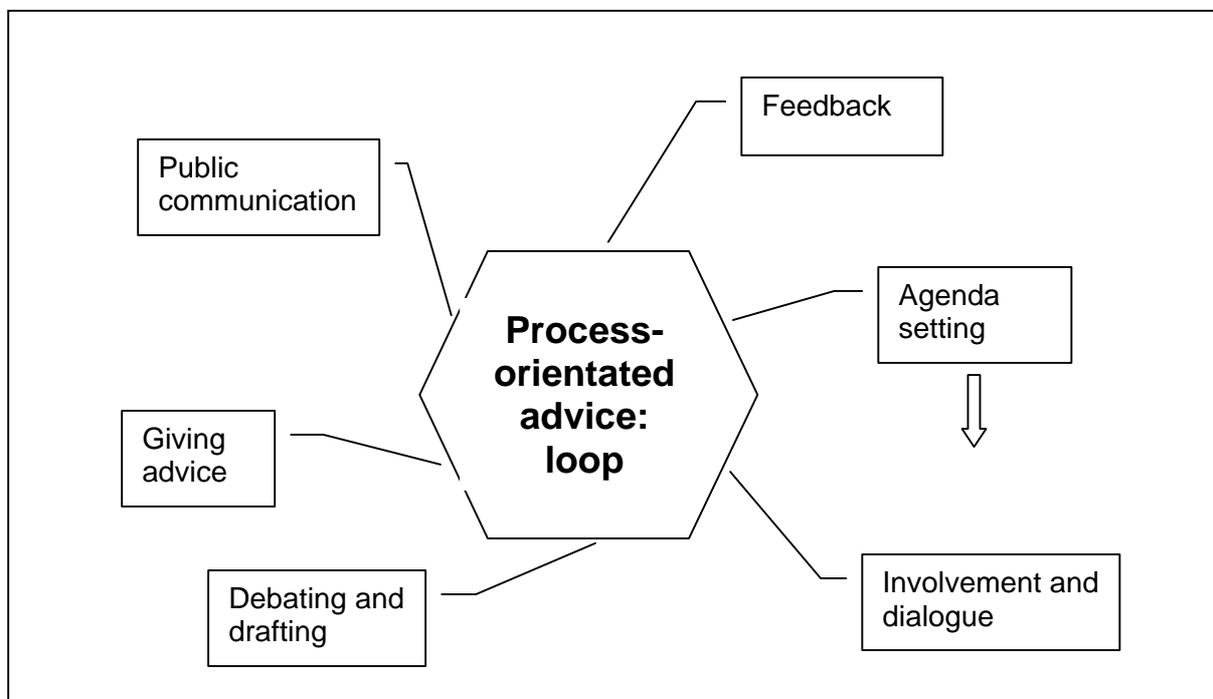
Councils have to play smart when daring hot topics, the results of which might be very directly useful, but possibly also particularly critical of the government position.

Governments are often or usually indifferent or resistant regarding SD. On occasions where it actually seeks advice and/or needs a mobilisation of actors, councils are in a pole position and can make a difference.

Governments' obligation to request and to justify advice might be useful to aspire in some countries, e.g. those with a strong legal emphasis in the political/governing style, and in others less, e.g. in the rather dialogue and consensus oriented cultures.

Following-up or "sustaining" advice is often strived for, but more often not pursued due to capacity constraints.

Figure 3: The recommendation loop (ideally)



5.2 Acting as agent and facilitator

All councils act as agent, intermediary and facilitator, at least by organising debate about their work within government and society, which is usually also done by those purely established as expert councils. Very explicitly this is the key purpose for the other types of soft and mandated representation, as analysed above (ch. 3. and 4.2). The internal aspects of this "doing the split" for council members on the input side, i.e. when acting in a council's deliberations, were outlined in chapter 4.2. The mutual learning in the council itself has an impact on the members.

The results of a council's work are meant to also take an outside track via the council members, i.e. they are in principle asked to take views developed in the council to their "own" organisation, networks and "resonating room". This takes to some extent also place in the expert councils.

To different extents council members "wear" this "hat" in public appearance outside the council's activities themselves. They do when giving presentations on behalf of the council, but this is in many cases mainly done by the chair (and the director). It might go beyond council members' capacity to do this more, which also relates to practical aspects like allowance practice (see ch. 4.1), and it might expand the "spanning" too much, but it is probably worthwhile to foster this special "snowball" potential.

Regarding the involvement of other actors, councils perform very well their agent capacity in all kinds of directions: They

- are in more or less steady contact with all relevant government departments at working level,
- invite scientists, agencies and relevant institutions to inform their work and to discuss advice,
- organise briefing meetings with government officials, members of parliament, business and civil society,
- hold public events/council meetings with guest from politics, business, civil society, and other (SD) councils,
- organise vertical dialogues with different means (strategy conferences, holding council meetings in regions with invited politicians,
- hold (annual) conferences and other debate platforms with wide attendance,
- involve different Ministries in councils' projects,
- initiate redesigning research for SD,
- trigger actors not yet involved to relate to the SD agenda (e.g. media),
- might reach out beyond national and European borders and organise projects with (actors from) developing countries.

One council, the UK SDC, in addition got a wider remit as "watchdog", which implies:

- supporting the Ministries with their individual SD Action Plans, incl. capacity building (including, for example, assisting the vocational training institute),
- assessing the achievements of the Ministries,
- auditing of the Ministries' managerial SD performance (procurement, energy use...).

For this purpose the UK SDC got assigned more staff than all the other councils altogether (see ch. 4.3). Clearly, this exceptional remit will develop over time and there will be some learning curve involved. Gearing into government departments in an active and supportive way might be appealing. It is a challenge to perform this kind of direct commitment and at the same time to continue independent advisory tasks.

Organising a peer review is a special type of activity that strongly relates to the agent and facilitator role of a council. The RMNO just organised for the Dutch government the review of the Netherlands' SD policies/strategy and will report about its experience. The council was not only organising facilities etc., but also in charge with the entire process, including support for the selection of peer countries and peers, and identifying stakeholders to participate during the peer week, for all of which the large societal and political network of the council was helpful.

Examples

Besides the phalanx of all kinds of organised discussions inside and outside the councils, interesting examples of such activities include:

❑ **Conferences, workshops and other discussions**

- Facilitating stakeholder participation at the annual SD week, organised by the federal government, FRDO-CFDD (B);
- Bi-monthly lunch discussions ('milieuthemas op tafel'), Minaraad (B);
- Public seminars with the Parliament, FNCSD (FIN);
- "Science meets policy", RLG (NL); Forums with the Academy of Sciences, OKT (HUN);
- 'Diner pensant' with industry CEOs (and other constellations), 'RMNO café' (occasional, informal event on a hot topic), RMNO (NL).

❑ **Triggering the government for action**

- Government launched energy-contracting as a measure to increase energy efficiency and to introduce a sustainability management of federal real estate with involvement of 70 properties (number are increasing), RNE (D);
- A pilot project on private consumption ("sustainable shopping basket") triggered a widely spread public communication by the responsible Ministry (including an advertisement campaign, local appearances on market places etc.), RNE (D);
- SD management systems in the governmental sector, MVB (S);
- Good corporate citizenship: an interactive web-based assessment model that enables any public sector organisation to account for all of its activities to be sustainable. This is now being applied to the hospital sector, and may be rolled out, SDC (UK);
- Departmental level sustainable development action plans (SDAPs) were installed by the SDS for the UK, and further fashioned by the council for the various government departments. Their prime purpose is to create a clear SD message and management structure in all government departments, SDC (UK).

❑ **Snowball effects**²⁹

- 30 ha goal of the SDS: popularising the topic of land consumption and making the need for a reduction target a political (and not only scientific) issue at different levels, by involving actors from communal, regional and national level as well as from different branches (like engineers, architects, planning consultancies...); the federal government set up issue-oriented research programmes on local solutions to reduce land consumption, on how to involve civil society in land management schemes and on sustainable forestry, RNE (D).

❑ **Stimulate other actors not yet involved**

- Meeting with communication departments of their member organisations to inform and assist in communicating SD in their respective channels, FRDO-CFDD (B);
- Creative workshops with TV makers; RNE (D).

Wrapping up

The agent capacity has been identified as the core of all councils' identity. It takes place at least within the council, i.e. among the council members. Figure 4 displays the addressees of councils, which are also the organisations from which council members are nominated. However, only in fewer cases the potential of outreach via the council members/their

²⁹ This is here meant in a basic sense of triggering activities of others. More specifically, "snowballing" has a campaign character with a whole range of different activities, bundled together in a process: branding, building up a community (incl. spending money), get others active, define points of reference, feedback mechanisms, back to politics and raise the issue again, trigger science, arts and other arenas less involved (enlarge the constituency and prevent the issue to fade away), create success stories, and communicate.

organisations is systematically fostered: Council members are often not actively asked to take councils' advice to their organisations (and, for example, report back). Also the potential to stimulate activities of their organisations in light of the councils' advice/activities is not used to the possible extent.

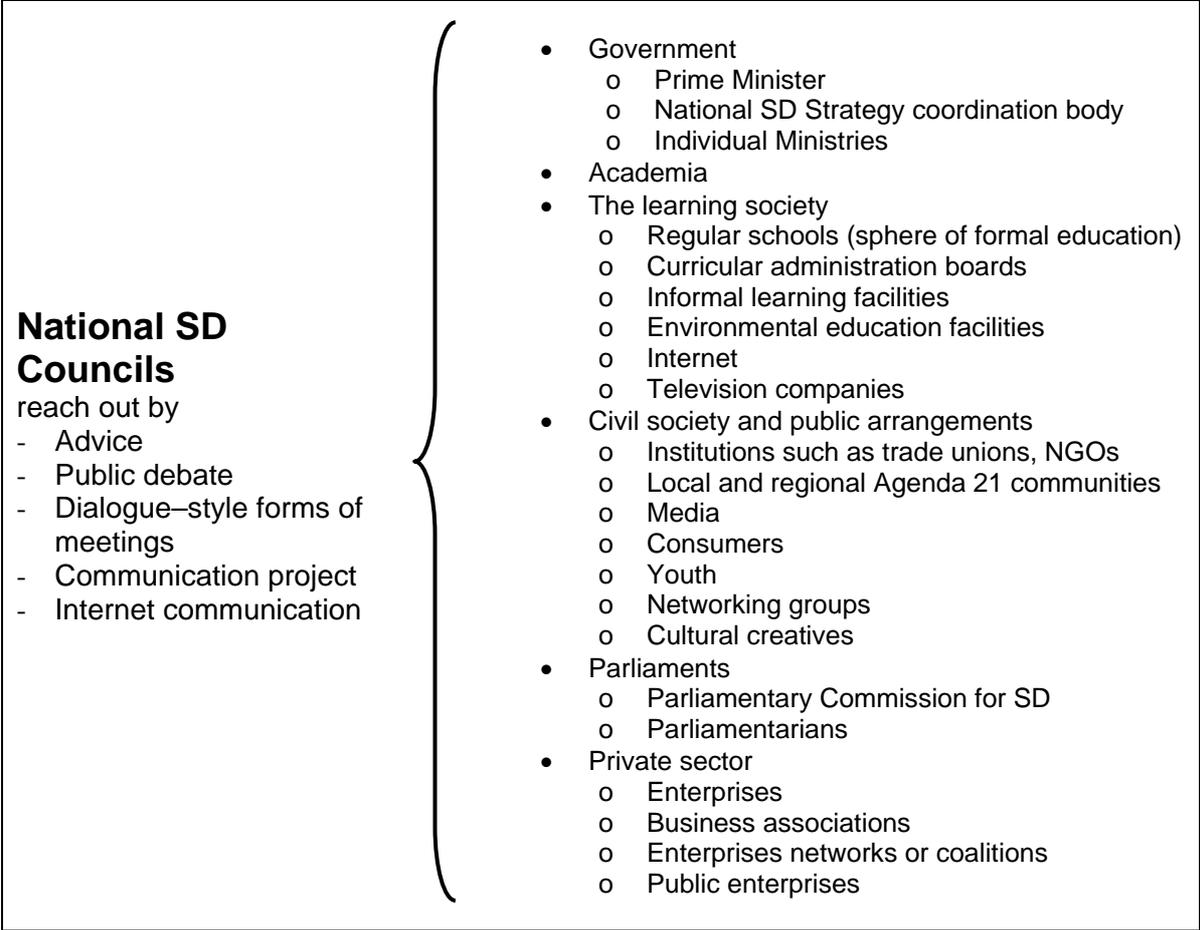
In all agent activities as listed above there are improvement potentials. Councils can make a difference by bringing people together over an SD matter where initially they are hostile or indifferent. Besides more fostering the track via the council members, there are in particular challenges in contacting and stimulating actors not yet involved; this also includes media as an important player (see also ch. 5.3), other communicators, as well as people involved in arts and culture. Also the local level likely needs more attention. More face-to-face contact with regional partners and community-based organisations can also help to highlight a council's work. Trade unions/social partners, individual businesses and in particular SME's, have in many cases not been stimulated for SD.

The wider capacity as "watchdog" bears potentials and challenges. As it is designed in the UK, it involves both supporting Ministries in their departmental level sustainable development action plans (SDAPs), as well as auditing them. This arrangement might be felt odd in other countries.

Conferences and other events are perceived as more inspiring when it succeeds to make them interactive and get real dialogue going. Also smaller workshops with a specific target group have shown to be successful regarding raising awareness, learning and follow-up action.

Councils in average have paid more attention to their core, or original, advisory task. For a useful shift towards more outreach, advice must not decrease in quality, but maybe in volume, which could also provide more capacity for following up (see ch. 5.1). On the other hand, more capacity needs to be built, both on the budget side, as well as in capability for professional and effective outreach. This could be achieved by hiring respective staff and/or by involving external specialists.

Figure 4: Addressees of SD Councils – outreach into society



5.3 Communication and stimulating involvement

As introduced above, communicating is inherently part of councils' activities: at least when presenting their advice, or with more emphasis when involving wider circles already when preparing advice, and when encouraging and making more use of the link of council members to their organisations and networks. Some council put an even stronger emphasis on communication, including activities towards a wider public. Whether they do, or are able to do, relate to self-concept, remit and resources. As stated above, for around half of the councils communicating is an explicit task in their remit. With this usually comes along a higher budget, as communication is resource intensive. But also others try to extend capacity spend for communication activities. Some have developed communication concepts (e.g. the Austrian FORUM). However, there are obvious limits, relating to the core activities, i.e. the joint work in the council that must not suffer the overall total that can be spent and the type of activities that can be done for a certain amount.

In average of all, councils spend around 15-20% of their budget for communication and projects³⁰. Very few spend less, and several significantly more (up to 50%).³¹ Some of the higher budget category put more emphasis on the advice side (more pieces of advice and less communication) and/or own studies, which has to do with the missing explicit remit for communication, and partly also with the self-conception.

One problem was also recorded that lies in a way in the nature of the councils, or at least some of them: In the more representative model it has occurred that council members on one hand side welcome communication activities of the council, but might change their mind when the issue turns out as attractive for the own organisation, which then would like to brand it and take up the cause itself.

For addressing a wider public there is in principle the possibility of broad campaigns and/or advertising like in commercial communication. This would require massive resources, going far beyond councils' budgets. They therefore search for various other ways of political communication, which might also better serve triggering involvement and creating ownership, and snowball effects. Such projects include for example contests (see below).

The regular communication activities range from publication of advice (printed and electronically), maintaining a website, issuing newsletters, press releases etc. to conducting hearings, workshops, lunch debates, conferences on outcomes and upcoming topics, including experimenting with innovative means of groups' communication (open space, world café, voting and rating etc.), and aiming at media coverage for events and activities.

Presentations of council members, as well as articles and interviews, to all kind of groups and forums are also a regular means for spreading the ideas and outcomes of the council.

Special types of action, where many of the aspects of the agent capacity as well as communication culminate, are projects for SD, usually called pilot or "lighthouse" projects or similar, carried out by the council itself, or a council's recommendation triggers projects by others, incl. government (see below government action). Another category here is "seed money projects", i.e. those where not only or primarily communication or similar activity takes place, but where additional funds are provided (by government for civil society projects).

When seeking criteria for an activity to be qualified as an "SD project", experience shows common aspects like

- Integration of different issues,
- Issues should address non-sustainable, long-term/persistent trends,
- Participatory approach.

Quantified targets and indicators might be useful or needed to make the project performance measurable.

³⁰ The latter might also include commissioned studies, i.e. not communication activities in the sense addressed here.

³¹ But this also relates to the size of staff, i.e. how much support work is done in-house and how much is outsourced.

Examples

Examples for communication beyond those included in chapter 5.2 as part of the agent capacity (with the emphasis on involving, also in advice), and beyond the regular communication activities (of advice etc.) include:

□ Other means of publications

- Postcards, calendars, feature movies, exhibitions;
- Supplementing councils' advice in journals (popular or expert), interviews and articles of council members;
- Press conferences; "PR-campaigns";
- Providing information for NGOs' websites and radio programs;
- Initiating and supporting educative websites on SD (<http://www.duurzame-info.be/>)

□ Addressing recommendations explicitly to other actors than government

- '*Sustainable shopping basket*' for consumers, RNE (D);
- Study book '*Future perspectives of Hungary*' (to all actors), OKT (HUN);
- '*I will if you will - towards sustainable consumption*' (advice addressing deadlocks between actors and proposing ways forward), SDC (UK).

□ Political communication: contests etc.

- Contests for schools/young people/seniors in essay writing, photography, graphic design and "action days", RNE (D);
- Annual communication project with young people, involving different media partners, with regional media coverage RNE (D).

□ Projects

- BRICS+G - Sustainability and Growth in Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Germany": a series of regional workshops/conferences in collaboration with the GTZ (German development aid agency), with a follow-up project on technology, RNE, (D);
- Supporting a nature conservation project, which helped farmers not to go out of business, CNADS (P);
- Backcasting dialogues with business on sustainable construction and buildings and on sustainable product chains for alimentary goods, MVB (S);
- In-depth review with the Office of Gas, Electricity Markets (OFGEM): planning better to incorporate SD into improved and more efficient regulation of the gas and electricity markets, SDC (UK);
- In-depth review on how Government policy since 1997 has helped or hindered supermarkets to deliver a more sustainable food system across the whole supply chain, and how it might enable greater sustainable development in the future, SDC (UK).

□ Seed money projects

- Triggered by the RNE the federal government set up a two-years programme providing "seed money" for civil society projects towards SD (available for local citizens groups and LA 21 groups), totalling 2 Mio Eur. for 2 years; RNE (D);
- The Finnish government sponsors a stimulating project of key NGOs: brainstorming workshops will be followed by columns in different newspapers and periodicals as well as further stakeholder discussions; FNCSD (FIN);
- Sponsoring a small number of events and programmes run by CSOs (including at community level) and a tool-kit on sustainability for teachers; Comhar (IRE).

Wrapping up

There are strong overlaps between acting as agent and communicating, with the latter implying a wider outreach. Parallel to the conclusions regarding the agent capacity, and "outreach" in general, it also applies that more efforts in communication activities are recommendable. Raising awareness, understanding, insight, and also dedication and different decisions on the citizens' and consumer side is beneficial for "implementing" an SD strategy or bring forward SD as a whole and individual policies with SD embedded.

Efforts in wider outreach require more resources than (smaller, limited) processes that can be subsumed under the agent capacity, where certain target groups and intended snowball effects are the key means. This should be made explicit in the tasks and capacities of councils.

Communication is seen as successful when many people are reached with not only a short-term effect. Innovative examples are the various contests conducted by the RNE, which have triggered personal commitment from participants as well as new ideas. Also the concept of the UK SDC to involve around 1000 citizens in a regularly consulted "SD panel" deserves further attention and could be picked up. Professionals in the communication arena are likely required as creative minds and idea contributors (which again requires resources).

Media is an important actor and councils should consider ways how to stimulate there: addressing the directors of (public) TV stations with a general request regarding SD in the program is one approach, workshops with TV and/or radio makers is another, - here starting with those which already do related programmes, and spreading out to others (like programmes on culture, history, up to entertainment and TV shows ³²).

What qualifies an activity/project as "SD projects" needs some further thought. Criteria should be settled and made transparent in order to avoid randomness and hence weakening of the concept and "label" of SD.

For visibility there are in principle the same criteria as for successful communication, or rather visibility is one aspect of successful communication. Councils may become trendsetters when it succeeds to frame topics in the SD perspective, but at the same time "down to earth", "telling" and attention raising.

Figure 5: New dynamics in the mandates for SD Councils

all	Advisor: Giving advice on NSDS Acting as Critical Friend Informing the public	mainstream
some	Agent: Webbing into society Watchdog	upcoming trend
few	Communicator: Keeper of the Long View Trend scout Rethinking institutional arrangements	experiments under way

³² The German public programme ARD for example has recently released a call for families who would like to participate in a contest type of TV-show called "going green" <<http://www.daserste.de/goinggreen/>>.

Annex 1: Types and capacities of (SD) councils and similar bodies

Type	Government body		Independent (advisory) council			
Chair	PM (or Minister)		(Minister)	Independent		
Characteristics	govt. coordination body with some stakeholder involvement	govt. lead / dominated coordination body/ dialogue platform	stakeholder/ expert council	stakeholder / expert council, with a few govt. representatives as members or observers	stakeholder/ expert council	stakeholder / expert council, with watchdog/ strong monitoring capacity
Capacity						
Coordination of government departments	•••	•••	--	--	--	--
Address government in the council itself	••	•••	•••	••	•	•
1. <u>Advice</u> of CSOs/ stakeholders to government, comments on government proposals/SDS	• (no joint advice)	•• (no joint advice)	•••	•••	•••	•••
2. <u>Agent/ intermediary/ facilitator</u> : Dialogue of stakeholders among each other:	--	•	••	•••	•••	•••
- agenda setting	--	•	••	•••	•••	•••
- joint advice / think-tank	--	--	••• (in working groups)	•••	•••	•••
- mutual learning / capacity building	--	•	••• (in working groups)	•••	•••	•••
3. <u>Communicating</u> with multipliers and into a wider civil society:						
- via council members, by conferences/media	--	••	•••	•••	•••	•••
- by stimulating/ fostering projects	--	(•)	(••)	(•••)	(•••)	••
	(SR)	CR, FIN	E, S	B, IRE, NL, P	A, D, F, HUN, NL, UK / Catalonia, Flanders	UK

- primary capacity
- side-capacity / applies to a lesser extent
- indirect capacity (or done in addition to core tasks)
- () some do, some do less

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Participating Councils

Austria:	Austrian Forum for Sustainable Development (FORUM)
Belgium:	Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD), Environmental and Nature Council of Flanders (Minaraad)
Czech Republic:	Government Council for Sustainable Development (RVUR)
Finland:	Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO)
France:	National Council for Sustainable Development (CNDD)
Germany:	Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)
Spain:	Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS)
Croatia:	Croatian Council for Environmental Protection (SAZO)
Hungary:	National Council on the Environment (OKT)
Ireland:	Comhar – The National Sustainable Development Partnership (COMHAR)
Netherlands:	Council for the Rural Area (RLG), Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning, Nature and Environment (RMNO)
Portugal:	National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS)
Slovenia:	Council for Environmental Protection (CEPRS)
UK:	Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)