Linking Strategies

LISSTRA-WORKSHOP, VIENNA, 27.-29. APRIL 2003

**Sustainable Development in an enlarged Union -
Linking national strategies and strengthening European coherence**

Discussion Input Paper

prepared by

Reinhard Steurer (reinhard.steurer@wu-wien.ac.at) and André Martinuzzi (andre.martinuzzi@wu-wien.ac.at)
Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Research Focus "Managing Sustainability"
www.sustainability.at

A workshop hosted by

**Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry, Environment and
Water Management**

In co-operation with:

**European Commission
(DG-Environment)**

**Ministry for the Environment
and Water Management,
Hungary**

**Ministry for Housing,
Spatial Planning and the Environment,
The Netherlands**

and

**Department for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs,
United Kingdom**

Table of Contents

I. Introduction: Purpose of Workshop and Discussion Input Paper

Welcome to Vienna!

The title of our Workshop provides three starting points: Sustainable Development (SD), an enlarged EU, and linkages between, respectively coherence among (National) Strategies for Sustainable Development – (N)SSDs – in Europe. While SD is the key issue, the enlarged EU is the frame in which the key purpose of the Workshop is discussed. The key purpose of the Workshop is **Li**nking **S**ustainability **Stra**tegies – LISSTRA – and strengthening European coherence, both among participating countries on the one hand, and the European Union and the national level on the other.

At the LISSTRA-Workshop these issues are dealt with in various forms: Our Program will start with an informal get-together, dedicated to "SustainAcitivity" on the opening evening. The first day starts with several key-notes, which approach the Workshop purpose from different perspectives. This opening session is followed by the first part of an extensive working group session, which continues on the second day and is concluded by a results presentation in the plenary. At the end of day one, the core session is broken up by a guided tour through the so-called Innovation Market Place. This session gives participants not only an overview on innovative SSD process examples in poster-format; moreover it provides a networking opportunity on the basis of specific country cases.

Although the NSSD-Roundabout session makes up for more than 50% of the LISSTRA-Workshop, time in the single working group rounds is limited due to the roundabout design (for an explanation of the NSSD-Roundabout session see part III). While this design implies some time limits to lengthy discussions by specific groups, it provides the possibility of linking topics and participants at the same time. This connecting feature is certainly crucial for LISSTRA. Because of time limitations in the single working group rounds we felt that it would be helpful to start up and structure the discussion process in advance. This is the key purpose of the Discussion Input Paper. In part II the six topics for the working group discussions are lined out with short explanations, possible points of discussion and some key questions.

We would like to point out that this input is not based on the personal judgment of the Scientific Support Team; instead it is based on more than 30 interviews with LISSTRA-participants from all over Europe. In these interviews we tried to get an impression about participants' SSD experiences, interests and needs. The analysis of the interviews resulted not only in the points and questions put together in part II, but also in a reframing of the six topics. The six working group topics outlined in part II are:

- o   Contents of SSDs
- o   EU institutional aspects, national and international interfaces
- o   Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: Supra- & international interfaces
- o   NSSDs and civil society issues
- o   National institutional aspects and the sub-national interface
- o   Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: National and sub-national level

As the LISSTRA-Workshop brings together civil servants responsible for NSSDs and those who work on the EU – member/accession country interface, the six topics reflect national as well as supra- and international SSD dimensions. For details on the design of the NSSD-Roundabout session and the placement of the six topics in the two roundabouts, please refer to part III of this paper.

II. Working Group Topics

Two general outcomes of the interviews are relevant for all six working group topics:

(1) Most interviewed participants expressed their expectation that descriptions of specific SSD documents and processes in various countries should not be the focus of the Workshop discussions. Participants hope to learn more about practical experiences in relation to the making and the implementation of NSSDs than about formal process descriptions. In order to have descriptions of NSSD processes at hand as background information, an updated inventory on NSSD details for more than 20 European countries is part of the conference material.

(2) Asked for good experiences at similar events in the past, the vast majority of interview partners mentioned that meetings of the kind are most successful, when problems and challenges are discussed honestly and openly. Therefore and because the working group sessions are certainly the appropriate setting to focus also on problems and challenges, we try to take critical points into account in this Input Paper.

Given the complexity of SD and of policy processes across the three SD dimensions, all six topics are self-evidently strongly connected. There are plenty of ways to deal with these cross-cutting issues in the rotations of the working groups. However, in order to provide starting points not only for the initial round, but also for the rotations of the working group session, we have emphasized major points of contact or thematic interfaces with other groups within the same roundabout in bolt letters. For the initial round we suggest that groups focus on those issues that bear less or weaker points of contact with other groups/themes than others. For the rounds in which two groups/topics get in touch we recommend to focus on those issues with respective points of contact.

Based on our interviews, we propose to focus on the issues lined out in the following six chapters. Note that the topics consist of 3 issues, each broken down into possible points of discussion. Finally the issues (respectively their points of discussion) are summarized with a key question at the end of the topic. Working groups may want to orient themselves at the three key questions, keeping the possible points of discussion as additional information in mind.

II.A Roundabout I – EU focus
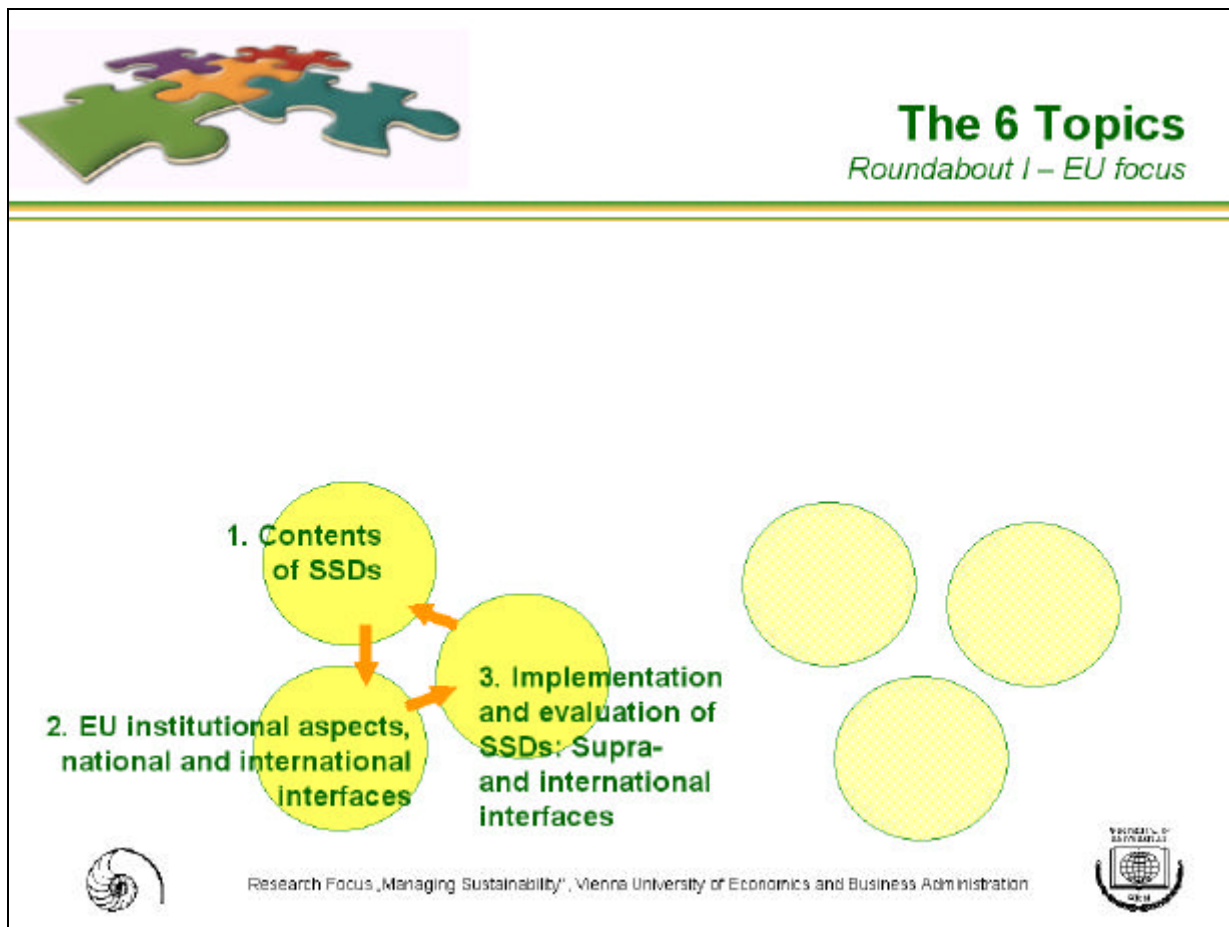
1.   *Contents of SSDs*[1]

The most obvious similarities concerning the content of SSDs are the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of SD (with a domination of the environmental dimension in some countries), the inclusion of certain problem fields (like poverty/social cohesion and energy), and the reference to SD indicators. At the same time SSDs differ widely, e.g. concerning their degree of specification (SSDs as general vision or as action plan), their priorities and the indicators identified.

While most EU member states have completed the elaboration of their NSSDs in the last years (alone 6 in 2002 in preparation of Johannesburg) and are able to share (first) experiences with contents issues, various accession countries are still in the making process. We observed that the participants' interest in contents issues corresponds to their country's NSSD status in two ways: When being asked to rank the 6 topics, participants who are amid or close to the making process indicated a stronger interest in contents issues than those who are beyond this phase. As the EU-SSD[2] is likely to be developed further, this strong interest in contents issues is also true for some EU-SSD experts. We also noted that the group of participants from countries closer to the making process are more interested in the questions, which fields of problems and what kind of priorities a strategy should consider, and how certain problems can be dealt with effectively. This general pattern of expectations given, we propose to discuss the following issues in the "Contents" working group:

1.a. Coherence of SSDs in Europe: Benchmarking degrees of specification, key priorities, key objectives, indicators and terminology used

Some participants (mainly from accession countries) are interested in the selection of problem fields and effective ways to deal with them. Others repeatedly raised the question, how specific NSSDs should be ("all-embracing shopping list" versus "selective priorities") and how the degree of specification influences the implementation process. Most participants are interested in the question, in how far SSDs are and should be coherent concerning the underlying philosophy (i.e. the understanding of SD as concept with three dimensions), their degree of specification, priorities, objectives, indicators and terminology used. These points can be summarized as follows:

- Which problem fields should be dealt with in SSDs (what to include)?

- What are effective policies in certain problem areas (e.g. climate change, transport, resource use, and especially in southern Europe: land use planning and sprawl)? [>>> Point of contact with *"Implementation"*]

- Degree of specification of NSSDs (how specific in terms of policy instruments and implementation schedules) and implications for their implementation. [>>> Point of contact with *"Implementation"*]

- Coherence of SSDs in Europe in terms of underlying philosophy, degrees of specification, priorities, terminology and sets of indicators used (which indicators, how many): Status quo, possibility and desirability of coherence can be discussed.

1.b. Integration of SD dimensions in NSSDs and the EU-SSD processes

Although the integration of the three SD dimensions is common-place in most SSDs, numerous participants articulated the existence of "conflict lines" between the dimensions (especially between the economic and social dimensions on the one hand and the environmental one on the other in times of weak economic performance). As such conflict lines imply implementation problems this issue is a major point of contact both with the groups *"Implementation"* and *"EU institutional aspects"*.

---

[1] In this paper "SSDs" always refers to NSSDs and the EU-SSD.
[2] For a free copy of the EU-SSD, go to http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/pubs/general.htm.

Besides that, it raises the following contents-related points of discussion:

- How do SSDs reflect conflict lines between the three SD dimensions?

- How can/should SSDs mirror such conflict lines? [>>> Point of contact with the groups *"Implementation"* and *"EU institutional aspects"*]

- Is SD integration dependent on who plays a leading role in NSSD processes (Environment Ministries versus Prime Minister's Offices)? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"EU institutional aspects"*]

- Which political measures/instruments can support an integration of the three SD dimensions (environmental fiscal reforms?, others?)? [>>> Point of contact with the groups *"Implementation"* and *"EU institutional aspects"*]

- Are there certain indicators/sets of indicators which support such integration more than others? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Implementation"*]

1.c. Further development of the EU-SSD and European coherence

The interviews showed that the role of the EU-SSD in the European policy process is not clear enough; neither on the national level nor on the EU – member/accession state interface. Therefore numerous participants see the need for a further development of the EU-SSD, which should be accompanied by a clarification of the EU-SSD's role both on the EU and the member state level. Such supra- and other international developments (like the Johannesburg-Summit) raise the question, in how far NSSDs should be developed further. All this can be summarized and considered further with the following questions:

- How can a further developed EU-SSD be linked up with the 6th EAP, the Lisbon and the Cardiff processes and how realistic is this to happen? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"EU institutional aspects"*]

- Does the forthcoming enlargement require changes in the contents and the role of the EU-SSD?

- How should a further developed EU-SSD take the emergence of NSSDs into account? What about a contents transfer from NSSDs to the EU-SSD (which could e.g. result in an EU-SSD chapter on environmental problems in particular regions like the Baltic Sea or the Mediterranean Sea region)?

- A further development of the EU-SSD raises questions of scope: What types of constraints should be set by an EU-SSD? What about a contents transfer from the EU-SSD to NSSDs in order to strengthen European coherence? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Implementation"*]

- How does the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation feed into NSSD processes? Should a future EU-SSD play a stronger mediatory role between international and NSSD processes? [>>> Point of contact with the groups *"EU institutional aspects"* and *"Implementation"*]

Key questions:

a) What is/should be dealt with in SSDs and how important is coherence?

b) How to deal with conflict lines between the three SD dimensions in SSDs in general and concerning political instruments and indicators in more detail?

c) What role can a further developed EU-SSD play on the EU and the member/accession state level?

2.   *EU institutional aspects, national and international interfaces*

On the EU level there exist five strategic processes, relevant for the implementation of SD: the 6th Environmental Action Program (6EAP), the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development (EU-SSD), the Cardiff Process, the Lisbon Process and the post-Johannesburg process. The 6th Environmental Action Program sets out the framework for EU environmental policy until 2012. The EU-SSD, which is based on a communication from the European Commission, has been approved by the Gothenburg European Council in June 2001. As other NSSDs, the short (14 paragraphs) and very general strategy is aiming at an integration of three dimensions of SD in EU policy. The Cardiff Process was initiated by the Cardiff European Council under the UK Presidency in June 1998. By requesting all relevant Council configurations to develop their own strategies for integrating the environment and sustainable development into their respective policy areas, the European Council initiated Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) on the EU level. The European Council in Lisbon defined as key objective for the EU to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economic area in the World, and thus to achieve continuous economic growth, job creation, and social cohesion. The WSSD in Johannesburg the international dimension to these EU processes. While there is a link between the 6th Environmental Action Program and the EU-SSD (mainly concerning the environmental aspects), the Lisbon process is developing momentum, "so far without adequate consideration of the environment".[3] As these strategic processes combine institutional and implementation issues in a way hard to separate, the relationship to the group *"Implementation"* goes beyond mere points of contact. Therefore issue a) here is almost identical with issue a) in chapter 3. We suggest dealing with the following issues and points of discussion by focusing rather on institutional aspects and to mingle them with the implementation perspective in the working group rotation.

2.a.   Leadership, institutional coordination and integration on the EU level

Here numerous participants expressed the following three concerns: (1) Even though the strategic processes mentioned above are complementary and should reinforce each other, some of them show only weak linkages. Especially the linkage between the Cardiff and the Lisbon Process needs to be strengthened. (2) A major obstacle for integrating different strategic processes is the fact that some are Council and some are Commission driven. (3) Council driven processes highly depend on the EU Presidency's agenda. As these agendas change every half year with the rotation of the Presidency, a lack of institutional continuity implies a lack of continuity in implementation.

Against this challenging background participants proposed to discuss the following questions [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Implementation"* throughout the issue]:

- Which of the five strategic processes mentioned above need stronger links?

- What do the different Council reform concepts in discussion mean for the challenges of discontinuity and EPI?

- How will this affect the Cardiff Process and what role can a further development of the EU-SSD play in this process? [>>> additional Point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- How to deal with the fact that Council and Commission driven processes exist in parallel, not really reinforcing each other? Should the European Commission play a more prominent role?

- How is the integration of the three SD dimensions (including EPI) working within the EU Commission?

- What prospects do you see for EPI in the EU Commission against the background of the forthcoming enlargement?

- What about a horizontal policy coordination for SD by the General Affairs/External Relations Council as proposed at the Gothenburg European Council?

---

3   R.A. Kraemer, A. Klasing et al. (2002): EU Environmental Governance: A Benchmark of Policy Instruments; retrieved from www.environment.fgov.be/Presidency/Govern/StudyEnvGov.pdf on 03/14/2003, 37.

2.b. EU–member/accession country interface

Asked for the need of institutional innovations along the EU–member/accession country interface, most participants emphasized that a closer cooperation is desirable, but that it should be achieved without new institutions. Against this background the following questions remain open for discussion:

- Is the cooperation of SD experts on the EU level, of national EU coordinators and of NSSD experts sufficient?

- What experiences did participants make with supranational activities on a regional level (like the Nordic Strategy among Nordic countries or the Baltic Agenda 21)? What role can such regional activities play for the EU–member/accession state interface?

- What role do the European Environmental Advisory Councils Network (EEAC) and National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs) play on the EU level as well as along this interface? What role could they play?

- Some participants from accession countries expressed need for support in institutional capacity building. How can the EU, the EEAC or individual member states respond to this?

- What about an additional interface between the EU and the sub-national level? What about an initiative "Europe for LA 21" (also in terms of LA 21 coherence)?

2.c. EU and international developments

Asked about the EU–UN interface several participants saw a problem in the fact that internal SD policy is driven by the Environmental Council and DG Environment while external SD policy (e.g. in relation to the Johannesburg WSSD) is in the hands of the General Affairs/External Relations Council. Is this another challenge of SD policy coordination on the EU level?

Key questions:

a)   What is the mutual relevance of 6EAP, EU-SSD, Cardiff and Lisbon Process?
b)   Room for improvement along the EU–member/accession country interface?
c)   Is the coordination between the EU's internal and external SD policy sufficient?

3. Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: Supra- & international interfaces

This topic focuses on SD implementation on the EU level, possible implications for the member state level and the role of international events like the Johannesburg WSSD in 2002. As this topic is strongly related to EU institutional aspects, we can refer to background information about 6EAP, the EU-SSD, the Cardiff and the Lisbon Process at the beginning of the previous chapter. Since SSDs are not without history, but stand in the tradition of Environmental Policy Plans, we suggest focusing not only on relatively young experiences with SSD implementation, but – where appropriate – also on past experiences with environmental policy implementation.

3.a. EU institutional setting and implementation

As the major challenges of SD implementation on the EU level are hard to separate from institutional challenges, we propose to discuss an issue, which is almost identical with issue a) of the group "EU institutional aspects" (for background information see chapter 2a). The interviews showed that participants are interested in the following questions [>>> Point of contact with the group *"EU institutional aspects"* throughout the issue]:

- Which of the five strategic processes mentioned above need stronger links? Which processes and links are crucial for SD implementation?

- What do the different Council reform concepts (e.g. long term presidency of one country versus long term delegations of various countries at the same time etc.) mean for the challenges of discontinuity and EPI?

- How will this affect the Cardiff Process and what role can a further development of the EU-SSD play in this? [>>> Additional point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- How to deal with the fact that Council and Commission driven processes exist parallel, not really reinforcing each other? Should the European Commission play a leading role?

- How is the integration of the three SD dimensions (including EPI) working within the EU Commission?

- What prospects do you see for EPI in the EU Commission against the background of the forthcoming enlargement?

3.b. EU–member/accession state interface: Experiences, policy learning and coherence

As the following points of discussion show, this issue addresses the possibility of policy learning between the two levels and questions of European coherence in SD implementation regarding policy instruments, implementation and evaluation schemes:

- Policy learning can take place in various forms: What can the European Commission learn from past environmental policy and current SSD implementation efforts in member states? What about the other way round (countries learn from EU experiences)? What can member/accession countries learn from each other concerning past environmental policy and current SSD implementation?

- Numerous participants mentioned that while conflict lines between the economic and the environmental dimension are often invisible in SSDs, they become obvious in the implementation phase. How to deal with this? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- Which policy instruments suit best for SSD implementation? Are there coherent experiences with e.g. regulations, economic incentives (environmental tax reforms) or voluntary agreements? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- Which policy instruments can support an integration of the three SD dimensions (environmental fiscal reforms?, others?)? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- Currently, evaluation schemes and indicators used, differ from country to country. What about coherence in these issues and how to reach it? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Contents"*]

- What can Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) contribute to SD implementation? What first experiences with SIA exist?

## 3.c. International dimension: WSSD and SSD processes in Europe

When asked about implementation of SSDs in Europe, the interviewed participants emphasized the relevance of the WSSD in Johannesburg. At the same time it turned out that they are not sure how this international dimension will influence SD implementation on the EU and the national level. Maybe the discussion of the following points can help to clarify this issue:

- What consequences of the WSSD can be expected for the EU-SSD & NSSD implementation?

- Numerous NSSDs were produced in preparation of the WSSD in Johannesburg. Are these NSSD processes likely to slow down because the "WSSD pressure" is gone?

- Some participants suggested that the rapid progress of the GATT/WTO process needs an environmental counterpart. Are they right? How could such an "environmental globalization" look like and how realistic are the options discussed?

Key questions:

a) What relevance do 6EAP, EU-SSD, Cardiff and Lisbon Process have for SD implementation on the EU level?

b) How can policy learning among member/accession countries as well as between them and the EU improve SD implementation in Europe?

c) What consequences does the Johannesburg process have for SD implementation in Europe?

II.B Roundabout II – national focus
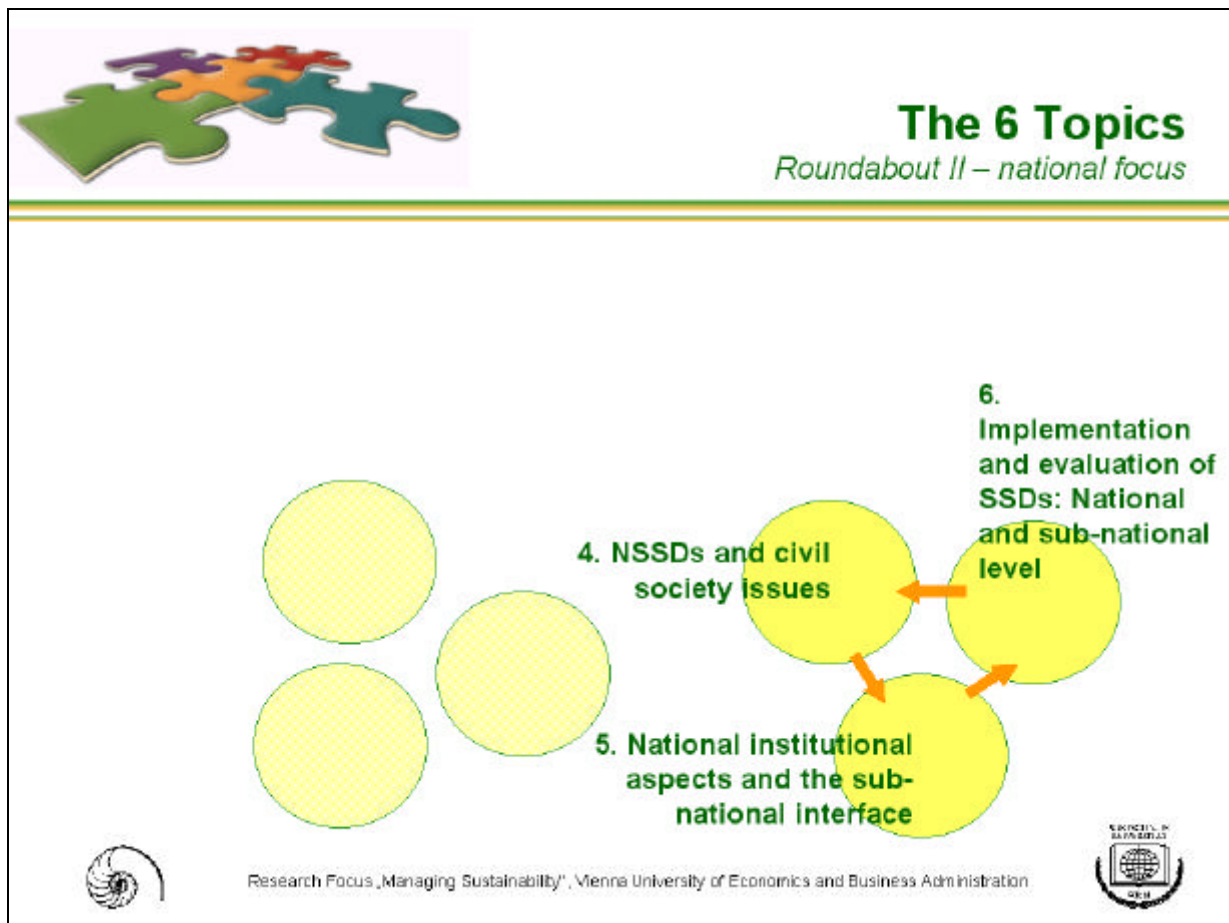
4. NSSDs and civil society issues

Past experiences with environmental policy/action plans have shown that SD implementation is foremost a question of political will and commitment. This is also repeatedly stressed in UN and OECD guidelines for NSSDs. Although politicians are well aware of their agenda setting power, in the case of social and environmental policy these crucial success factors seem to be closely linked to public opinion, respectively public pressure. This is at the core of this topic, which deals with public awareness, public participation and the role of National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs). In the interviews we noted that while public participation is lagging behind the expectations in most countries, participants expect to learn from some good experiences in other countries. We suggest structuring the exchange of experiences with the following three issues:

4.a. Public awareness: General issues and trends

As general and broad it is, this topic is important for the whole NSSD process. Our interview partners raised numerous points of discussion and questions, which can be summarized as follows:

- Interview partners often mentioned that the general public knows little about NSSD processes. Why? Can this be changed?

- One participant argued that not only the public is hardly aware of NSSD processes, but also politicians. Do you agree? How can this be changed? Is this a kind of vicious circle (low political priority because of lacking public pressure)? If yes, is there a way out of this circle?

- What role does education play in all this? Is the answer to this question reflected in NSSDs (i.e., is education on SD issues considered as major challenge)?

4.b. Public awareness and NSSD implementation

In 2002 the Swiss population rejected an Environmental Fiscal Reform by vote. In other countries people don't have the chance to vote on this matter, but the outcome is often the same (no Environmental Fiscal Reform because of perceived public objection). This example illustrates that public awareness is a crucial factor for the implementation of SD policies. Against this background we suggest discussing a couple of questions very similar to those in issue 6a on implementation of NSSDs [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Implementation"* throughout this set of questions]:

- How does public awareness influence the implementation of SD in the various policy fields? Are there good examples to learn from?

- Is public awareness one of the main obstacles for SD implementation?

- Can indicators influence public awareness for SD issues?

- The three dimensions of SD seem to be reasonably balanced in SSDs themselves. But what about the implementation phase and public opinion? Is the environmental dimension loosing ground at the expense of the economic and the social dimension?

- In how far is the implementation of SD dependent on the economic and the budgetary situation? Are there ways to cope with such constraints?

- How difficult is it to implement effective policies or policy instruments?

4.c. Participation in NSSD processes: Experiences and lessons learned

Participation is a core issue of SD. Therefore it found its way also in UN and OECD guidelines for NSSDs. In chapter 8.7 of Agenda 21 it says e.g., NSSDs "should be developed through the widest possible participation".[4] Although representative democracies often struggle with participation because it is against their representative nature, most countries tried to develop their NSSDs with some kind of participation. Interestingly many interview partners noted that participation lagged behind expectations probably because of time pressure. In addition to this explanation we propose to explore this issue with the following points (some of which refer to other group's topics):

- Several participants mentioned financial restrictions of those who ought to participate as another obstacle for participation. In how far is participation a question of resources? Would financial support of stakeholders help or would it trap them?

- How to use certain organizations to reach certain societal groups? How to find the right balance between societal representation and direct participation of individuals?

- One participant experienced a kind of vulnerability of participation, meaning that disappointing participation may lead to less participation in the future. Is the question not only how to increase participation, but also how to sustain participation?

- Are there experiences how to turn provocateurs into constructive actors?

- Do different phases of the NSSD process require different forms of participation?

- In how far are NCSDs also vehicles of participation? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"National institutional aspects"*]

- Can participation in NSSD processes be strengthened through the local level? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"National institutional aspects"*]

Key questions:

a) What can be done to increase awareness for SD issues in the general public and – if applicable – among politicians?

b) What lessons can be learned from positive and negative experiences concerning public awareness and SD implementation?

c) How can participation be achieved in a way that satisfies both, governments and stakeholders?

---

[4] For other NSSD guideline publications see

(1) IIED (2002): Sustainable Development Strategies: A Resource Book. Compiled By Barry Dalal-Clayton and Stephen Bass for OECD and UNDP; retrieved from http://www.nssd.net/working/resource/ on 10/31/2002.

(2) OECD-DAC (2001): Strategies for Sustainable Development: Practical Guidance for Development Cooperation. Paris: OECD; retrieved from http://www.nssd.net/pdf/gsuse.pdf on 10/20/2002.

(3) United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (2001): Guidance in Preparing National Sustainable Development Strategies: What are National Sustainable Development Strategies?/Revised Draft; retrieved from http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/web_pages/nsds_guidance_final_ghana.pdf on 10/31/2002.

(4) United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (2001): Guidance for Preparing National Sustainable Development Strategies: What are National Sustainable Development Strategies? Executive Summary; retrieved from

http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/web_pages/nsds_guidance_executive_summary.pdf on 10/31/2002.

5.   *National institutional aspects and the sub-national interface*

Institutions, supporting the integration of the three SD dimensions horizontally (i.e. on the national level), exist in most EU member states and accession countries: Typically, an inter-ministerial body is coordinating the implementation of the NSSD within the government, and/or (most often and) a kind of National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) functions as advisory body. However, inter-ministerial bodies differ in terms of leadership, policy relevance and effectiveness. NCSDs differ concerning their political influence, their participants (non-governmental only or mixed) and the degree to which NCSDs emphasize their advisory and their participatory purpose. Against this general background of institutional similarities and differences, the following issues and points of discussion came out of the interviews.

5.a. Institutional innovations for cooperation and SD integration

Participants are interested in experiences with different forms of inter-ministerial bodies of SD cooperation and NCSDs. Possible conclusions about political influence and effectiveness of the different institutional settings are of special interest. Another point of interest is how effectively coordinating institutions can deal with conflict lines between the three dimensions of SD. Against this challenging background, questions about limits of institutional coordination (i.e. networking among institutions) and the need for stronger institutional integration (i.e. a restructuring of responsibilities within governments) arise. We suggest addressing this issue with the following questions:

- What experiences do countries make with their form of inter-ministerial cooperation?

- How do inter-ministerial forms of cooperation deal with conflict lines between the three SD dimensions? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Implementation"*]

- Where are the limits of inter-ministerial cooperation, beyond which the need for a restructuring of responsibilities emerges?

- What experiences did countries make with NCSDs concerning participants and political influence through participation? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society Issues"*]

- In how far can and should NCSDs act not only as expert bodies, but also as vehicles for participation? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society Issues"*]

- Is the NCSDs proximity to governments related to their political influence? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society Issues"*]

5.b. NSSD leadership: Implications for SD integration and political commitment

The fact, that a country's SSD process is most often lead by the institution who plays a leading role in the inter-ministerial SD body, illustrates the central role these coordinating institutions play in NSSD processes. While most inter-ministerial institutions are headed by environmental ministries, some are lead by Federal Chancellery/Prime Ministers' Offices representatives or high-level politicians. Possible consequences of such leadership patterns can be discussed with the following points:

- Some participants agreed that a leading role of Environment Ministries sometimes results in an imbalance of the three SD dimensions towards the environment (at least on the program level). Others saw the balance intact but agreed that some actors may perceive it that way. How should Environment Ministries deal with this?

- Participants from countries, in which NSSD processes are headed by the Chancellery/Prime Minister's Office or by high-rank politicians (like Germany and Finland), seem to be more satisfied with the degree of political commitment in their country than others. Does the kind of NSSD leadership really correlate with political commitment? [>>> Point of contact with the group ***"Implementation"***]

- Can civil servants sustain political commitment or make up for a lack of political commitment?

- Should Environment Ministries sustain or increase their driving force in NSSD processes? How can they?

5.c. Cooperation between the national and the sub-national level

In some countries SSDs exist not only on the national, but also on the regional, here and there even on the local level. Most of these sub-national activities are hardly linked to NSSD processes (exceptions confirm the rule). The same is true for LA21 activities, which exist all across Europe: Most interviewed participants emphasized that it would make sense to bring these widespread, but isolated activities under a "common roof" within NSSD processes. Such a "common roof" could provide national guidance, lead to an exchange of otherwise lost experiences and increase synergies of SD implementation. These points of discussion can be summarized with the following questions [>>> Point of contact with the group ***"Implementation"*** throughout this issue]:

- What about national and sub-national coherence of priorities, evaluation/reporting schemes and indicators? Would it make sense to work on a "common roof" for regional and local SD activities (like LA21)?

- If yes, why do most countries lack such a roof?

- How can national and sub-national coherence be increased? How could a "common roof" look like? Are there good examples to learn from?

- What consequences would national and sub-national coherence have for regional and local activities?

Key questions:

a) How well do institutional innovations like inter-ministerial SD bodies and NCSDs work?
b) Who should play a leadership role in NSSD processes and why?
c) What about a "common roof" for regional and local SD activities in a country?

6. *Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: National and sub-national level*

While in some countries the environmental dimension dominates SSD documents, several participants expressed their concern about a domination of the economic dimension in the implementation phase. For them this seems to correlate with the economic situation: The weaker economic growth, the more important the economic and the social dimensions of SD. In other words: Although SSD documents seem to achieve a fairly good integration of the three SD dimensions, it seems to be hard to carry it over into the implementation phase. This is the general background against which we suggest to discuss the following three issues:

6.a. Experiences with SD implementation on the national level

In chapter 3 we already mentioned that SSDs are not without history, but stand in the tradition of Environmental Policy Plans. Therefore we suggest focusing not only on relatively young experiences with NSSD implementation, but – where appropriate – also on past experiences with environmental policy implementation. Concerning the implementation of NSSDs in Europe we want to point out one obvious difference: While NSSDs in many countries are accompanied by annual or bi-annual action plans or work programs, which specify policy details, others don't have something alike and rely on the NSSD itself. When discussing the following points it may be of interest to watch out for possible consequences which arise out of these two types of implementation processes:

- How good does implementation work in the various SD policy fields? Why good/not so good in certain policy fields? Are there good examples to learn from? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

- What are the main obstacles of SD implementation? How can they be dealt with? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

- In how far is the implementation of SD dependent on the economic and the budgetary situation (see introduction above)? Are there ways to cope with such constraints? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

- Are certain policies or policy instruments more effective than others?

- How can Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) contribute to SD implementation? What first experiences with SIA exist?

- How difficult is it to implement effective policies or policy instruments? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

6.b. Experiences with evaluation processes on the national level

As already mentioned in chapter 1, virtually all NSSDs pay attention to the need for evaluation on the basis of indicators. Despite this common understanding of a good strategy process, evaluation schemes and indicators chosen differ considerably. In this issue we found two major points in which participants are interested in: First, participants expect to simply get an idea about different approaches chosen. Secondly, most of them seem to believe that especially in this technical issue, European coherence is desirable. We suggest approaching these two points of interest with the following questions:

- What experiences did countries make with their reporting and evaluation processes and in how far do these processes support SD implementation?

- Which indicators work well, which don't? Are there any "do's" and "don'ts"?

- How can indicators be designed to drive change? How do they raise public awareness best? [>>> Point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

- Is it desirable to increase European coherence concerning evaluation mechanisms and indicators? If yes, how can this happen?

6.c. NSSD implementation and the sub-national level

NSSD objectives often address issues for which not (only) national, but (also) sub-national institutions are responsible (a good example is spatial planning/urban zoning). Therefore the implementation of NSSDs also depends on the regional and local level. As this challenge of implementation is also one of institutional cooperation, this issue is closely connected to issue c) of the group "Institutions National", dealing with very similar questions [>>> Point of contact with the group *"National institutional aspects"* throughout this issue]:

• In how far does the sub-national level support NSSD process?

• Can local activities make up for a possible lack of participation and political commitment on the national level? [>>> additional point of contact with the group *"Civil Society"*]

• Would national and sub-national coherence of priorities, evaluation/reporting schemes and indicators help to implement SD?

• If yes, why do most countries lack such a "common roof"?

• How can national and sub-national coherence be increased? How could a "common roof" look like? Are there good examples to learn from?

Key questions:

a) How does SD implementation work and what conclusions can be drawn concerning certain policy instruments, economic and budgetary constraints?

b) How should evaluation schemes (including sets of indicators) be designed in order to support SD implementation?

c) How can countries ensure that NSSD objectives, which touch on responsibilities of sub-national institutions, will be implemented?

III. NSSD-Roundabout: Session design

The NSSD-Roundabout is a working group session with rotating character. This design has two important advantages: First, it enables participants to deal not only with one, but with three topics in depth. Second, because 3 working groups are connected in two distinct roundabouts, the in depth coverage doesn't come at the expense complexity.

A total of six working groups will cover one topic each. Issues and points of discussion of the six topics are lined out in part II above. While each roundabout contains one general topic, the other two focus on supranational issues in the one and on national issues in the other roundabout.

Topics in Roundabout I:	*Topics in Roundabout II:*
Contents of SSDs	NSSDs and civil society issues
EU institutional aspects, national and international interfaces	National institutional aspects and the sub-national interface
Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: Supra- & international interfaces	Implementation and evaluation of SSDs: National and sub-national level

The placement of the six topics within the two roundabouts as well as the placement of participants in the working groups did not happen by chance. The two matching processes are based on the information you kindly provided us in the interviews.

How is the NSSD-Roundabout session supposed to work? The session is made up by the following four working group rounds: In the initial round, each group works on its assigned topic for 90 minutes and produces up to 2 posters. After this initial discussion the first rotation occurs. Every working group has a speaker (guiding the discussion) and a rapporteur (co-moderating and writing the posters). In the first rotation the speakers and rapporteurs take their posters to another group within their 3-group-roundabout. There they present their posters, discuss them according to some points of contact with the group they visit and collect inputs for another poster. In the meantime the remaining group works with the visiting speakers and rapporteurs on points of contact with another topic. This is repeated one more time: Speakers and rapporteurs move on to the group they have not visited yet within their roundabout, present their initial posters again and collect new inputs on an additional poster.

In the final part of the working group session on the next day, the speakers and rapporteurs come back to the group they initially worked with and present the two new posters to their group. Then each group works out a poster presentation of its results, including the inputs gathered in the other groups and the ideas collected by group members during their work with visiting speakers on the two other topics.

These results will be presented by the speakers and rapporteurs in a plenary session. As the two roundabouts are working independent from one another, the plenary session will make sure that the groups get an impression of what happened in the other roundabout.

We hope the topics outlined in part II and this description of the NSSD-Roundabout design will help you to have a valuable exchange of opinions and experiences at the Vienna Workshop.