

“European Sustainability Berlin 07”

Proceedings

for the

ESDN Conference 2007

Hosted by the German Presidency of the EU

June 3-5, 2007 in Berlin, Germany

prepared by

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www.sd-network.eu

for the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)



**German Council for
S U S T A I N A B L E
Development**



**Die
Bundesregierung**



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1. Introduction

The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Conference 2007 “European Sustainability Berlin 07” (ESB07) took place in Berlin on 3-5 June in the context of the German Presidency of the EU Council. The Conference was hosted by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) on behalf of the German Federal Government, and it was facilitated by IFOK and the ESDN Office, with additional input from the Network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC).

The aim of the annual ESDN Conferences is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge among coordinators of SD strategies and policies from the regional, national and EU level, experts from National Sustainable Development Councils, members of the SD working group of the EEAC, NGOs and selected research institutes. In total, about 160 participants from the above mentioned groups participated at the ESB07 event (for the list of participants, see the Annex document).

The conference was the sixth in a series of similar events. Previous ESDN Conferences were held in The Hague (2002), Vienna (2003), Kinsale (2004), Windsor (2005) and Salzburg (2006) (for a documentation of all conferences, please go to the ESDN Conferences section at www.sd-network.eu).

The two major topics of the Conference were (a) linking politics and administration and (b) stimulating informed debate in civil society. The first topic was chosen for several reasons:

- Although politicians and administrators together constitute the executive power of the state, the two groups can be regarded as two branches of government that are characterised by different rationalities and interests. In other words, politicians and administrators have to collaborate closely in order to fulfil their executive functions, but they do not always pull at the same string. This is often obvious in the context of SD strategies.
- Virtually all strategy guidelines and most scientific studies emphasise high-level political commitment and involvement as key success factor of SD strategies.
- Securing political commitment in general and practical issues of better linking politicians and public administrators in particular have been raised repeatedly as key issue during previous ESDN conferences.

The second topic (“Stimulating informed debate: Sustainable Development Councils as an organised form of civil society”) was chosen because it complemented the first focal topic on “linking politics and administration” well by bringing linkages to civil society actions into play.

The two key topics were subject to several keynote and dinner speeches, in-depth working group discussions and a sounding panel that consisted of two parliamentarians, one administrator and one civil society representative. Additionally, issues related to the EU SDS (peer reviewing and reporting) were discussed by two panels. Finally, all participants discussed the issue of how to develop the ESDN further at the end of the event.

The proceedings are structured as follows: Section 2 summarises the welcome addresses and keynote speeches. Sections 3 and 4 document the statements submitted by the working groups and summarized by the editorial team, the prioritization of statements that resulted from an innovative voting procedure, summary reports to the plenary that were given by selected speakers and the panel discussion on both themes. Section 5 summarises a two-fold panel discussion on (i) peer reviewing and (ii) reporting in the EU SDS process. The proceedings conclude with a summary of the last two sessions of the conference on ESDN activities and “practising continuity” between EU presidencies and the ESDN.

Supporting documentation of the ESDN Conference 2007, including:

- The Conference Programme

- The ESDN and the EEAC Discussion Papers for the two breakout sessions;
- MP3-audio files of the keynote presentations and the panel sessions and
- Photos

is available in the conferences section of the ESDN homepage at www.sd-network.eu. Full transcripts of all keynote speeches and press releases on the event (in German) are available at the website of the German Council for SD at www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/ESB07.

2. Welcome addresses and keynotes

Peter Rösgen from the German Federal Chancellery welcomed the participants. He pointed out that SD is a guiding principle of the German Federal Government (coordinated by the German Chancellery) and the German EU Presidency. Mr. Rösgen reminded the participants that this conference takes up the discussions of the last ESDN Conference in Salzburg 2006 and went on to discuss the major topics of the entitled “Linking Policies, Implementation and Civil Society Action”:

He said that *linking* policy sectors, institutions, political levels and generations is a key aspect of SD, and he pointed out a recent example: The heads of state of the EU Member States during the Spring European Council meeting in March 2007 decided upon an integrated climate and energy policy, culminating in a European Energy Action Plan.

Mr. Rösgen furthermore argued that the major challenge of SD policy-making is *implementation*. This would ultimately require political commitment. For the achievement of implementation, he identified horizontal integration as an important issue. For instance, the German Chancellery fosters integrative efforts of the various sectoral ministries.

Finally, Mr. Rösgen pointed out that the implementation of SD can only be successful, if *civil society* is included. The National Sustainable Development Councils (NSDCs) are important catalysts for stakeholder participation in SD policy-making. In Germany, there is also a parliamentary advisory council for SD.

In the first keynote of the conference, **Klaus Töpfer** (former Executive Director of UNEP, former German Federal Minister, and Member of the German Council for SD) addressed the topic of “Meeting global challenges: The contribution of SD strategies”. He argued that on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Brundtland Report it is timely to reflect upon the impacts of SD policies.

At the beginning, Mr. Töpfer referred to the problem of risk management when formulating SD policies. He argued that high-risk issues like climate change need to be dealt with by policy-makers despite uncertainties. He pointed out that scientific knowledge can help detect and diminish areas of uncertainty that require political action. Overall, political action should be guided by the precautionary principle.

In terms of strategically integrating the three pillars of SD, Mr. Töpfer pointed to the importance of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) and National Sustainable Development Councils (NSDCs). The latter involve different stakeholder groups and should advise governments regarding their policy integration efforts. Furthermore, he pointed to sustainability impact assessments (SIA) as another tool for policy integration. In this context, the most important information governments would need for informed decision-making are the financial costs of decisions and their effect on SD. Mr. Töpfer argued that policy integration is of pivotal importance for the realization of the SD concept, but an extremely challenging task for governments.

Currently, sectoral policy approaches are still dominant. Gradually, however, integrative approaches would increase in importance in policy-making throughout Europe. As an example, he referred to the energy policy approach of the EU, which was decided by the heads of state during the Spring European Council meeting in March 2007. The Council adopted an integrated climate and energy policy with the important “3 times 20 until 2020” goal.¹

Mr. Töpfer pointed out that efforts for SD policy integration on the global or supra-national levels can only be successful if they are implemented at the national or sub-national levels. In this context, he referred to the work of NSDCs, like the UK SD Commission, which published a report in 2006, “I will if you will”, about concrete steps for individual consumers, businesses and governments that are necessary to change sustainable consumption patterns. Finally, Mr. Töpfer described five implantation challenges in the EU: (a) to redirect structural funds towards SD, (b) to build up demand-sided SD policies, (c) to make SD more “fancy”, (d) to invest into SD research and development and (e) to link up with the local communities.

Volker Hauff (German member of the Brundtland Commission and now chair of the German Sustainable Development Council) gave a 20-year update on the Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” that was published in 1987. He emphasised that several of the key messages in the Brundtland Report are still valid, such as:

- The then new notions of equity and justice within and between generations;
- The fact that we still have to live within and obey the carrying capacities of the earth;
- Poverty as the main reason for environmental destruction.

Issues addressed in the Brundtland Report that are still relevant are conflict prevention (including arms trade, the spread of nuclear weapons), economic growth, energy and climate, food security and food prices. However, Mr. Hauff emphasised that the most concrete and powerful recommendation of the Brundtland Commission was to convene an international conference. This brought the Rio process on the agenda, followed by the Johannesburg conference in 2002.

About the new US climate change initiative, Mr. Hauff said that it is not convincing because it does not address the economics of climate change adequately. Solving the problem means providing the market economy with a frame of regulations and incentives. “Appeasement policy” and “avoiding straight language” is wrong, Mr. Hauff concluded, and he added that Europe can become the first knowledge-based low-carbon economy if it doesn’t avoid unilateral leadership.

Regarding the implementation of SD policies, Mr. Hauff said that SD strategies are an important tool if they comprise quantified targets, good monitoring, good management skills and independent councils. Overall, however, he sensed more momentum in the private than in the public sector. CSR companies may still be a minority, but they will set the benchmarks of CSR for all. He concluded that we have to link the business case for SD with the regulatory framework, and activities in businesses and civil society councils with those in the public sector.

In the discussion, nuclear energy and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and sustainable transportation were raised. Mr. Hauff emphasised that using nuclear energy is only responsible if long-term problems such as proliferation, nuclear waste, international safety standards and liability schemes are addressed adequately. He emphasised that none of these problems was solved 20 years ago, and none is solved today.

The first conference day concluded with a speech by **Astrid Klug**, Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany. She emphasized that with the adoption of the renewed EU SDS, the European-wide

¹ 20 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990; 20 per cent savings in the EU’s energy consumption compared to projections for 2020; and 20 per cent share of renewable energies in the overall EU energy consumption by 2020.

SD discussion has entered a new phase as (i) national SD strategies should be based on and implement the EU SDS to a greater degree, and (ii) at the same time Member States are called to incorporate their experiences into the European discussions. The EU SDS furthermore fosters mutual learning processes through calling for biannual progress reports on the implementation status in the MS. By using best practices such as peer reviews and indicators linked to quantified targets, faster and more effective progress on the road to SD could be made.

With regard to the question of how policy-making, administration and civil society can be linked best to make SD a vital part of the political routine and a central theme of government action, Ms. Klug called to strengthen the involvement of parliaments because they (i) decide on the laws for implementing SD strategies and (ii) act as driving forces of governments.

The second conference day opened with a keynote presentation by **Peter Tempel** from the German Federal Foreign Office (responsible for the national coordination of the EU SDS in Germany). Mr. Tempel pointed out that the Brundtland Report set out a common vision for SD. Since then, political structures and processes have been established to implement this vision. However, there are still diverging interests between countries on issues like energy, climate change, air quality, etc. International agreements and their implementation are difficult to achieve and, therefore, the influence of the work of the UN Commission on SD has been questioned several times over the last years. Nevertheless, the EU is convinced that this commission is an important forum to advance SD.

From the perspective of the German Federal Government, SD is an important concept that needs to be addressed in policy-making. Germany is committed to the Rio process, has developed an NSDS and several councils foster the uptake of SD in daily policy-making. As Germany is a federal country, regions and local authorities need to undertake measures for and are committed to SD.

Mr. Tempel underlined that on the EU level, SD became a fundamental policy concept and was included in the Amsterdam Treaty as guiding principle of the community. Furthermore, the EU SDS was renewed in June 2006 to provide further strategic orientation for policy-making. The strategy established a two-year monitoring cycle, which includes structures of vertical integration between the EU and the Member States. He argued that the EU SDS must be linked to the Lisbon Strategy and that both documents should complement each other. Mr. Tempel pointed out that the German EU Presidency focuses on some EU SDS priorities, like energy and climate policy. As a result, the 2007 Spring European Council adopted an integrated energy and climate policy for the EU. He argued that the “3 times 20 until 2020” commitment was the politically most relevant part of the Council decision. This commitment should also give impulse to the international discussion on climate change.

Mr. Tempel then emphasised the importance of SD policy integration. Regarding vertical integration, SD objectives need to be implemented at each political level. In the EU, there is currently a discussion about the burden sharing between Member States, like individual CO₂ reduction targets. Regarding horizontal integration, there is a need to integrate SD issues into sectoral policies. Currently, numerous political meetings address efforts and challenges of horizontal integration.

Mr. Tempel concluded by referring to the EU SDS progress report that will be presented by the European Commission in September 2007. From the perspective of the German Federal Government, three issues were identified as particularly important:

- The relationship between the EU SDS and the Lisbon process and the need for an integrated approach of growth, employment and environment;
- The Discussion on SD indicators: Germany is in favour of a political endorsement of SD indicators as they are not only required for monitoring progress but also for communicating SD; and

- Global dimensions and security issues, i.e. stronger links between the EU SDS and global partnerships on integration of environmental, development and security policies.

As part of the evening programmes at the Hotel Hilton on the first evening and the Berlin boat tour on the second evening, dinner speeches were held by **Günter Krings** (Member of the German Bundestag, and Head of the Parliamentary Board on Sustainable Development) and **Björn Stigson** (President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development/WBCSD).

3. Linking politics and administration: results of the first breakout session

3.1 Procedural issues

In the first breakout session, participants discussed linkages between political and administrative aspects of SD strategies in line with four topics (for contents details, see the [Discussion Paper I](#) provided by the [ESDN Office](#), and for a short overview the table below) The four topics were discussed by different groups in parallel. Each working group discussion consisted of two rounds (45 minutes each), both guided by a moderator.

During the discussion, participants were asked to agree on statements that the moderator submitted to an editorial team (for a documentation of all submitted statements, see the separate Annex document). The editorial team consisted of experts from IFOK and the German Council for SD who were observed and supported by Günther Bachmann (German Council for SD) and Reinhard Steurer (ESDN Office). Based on the input from the different groups, the editorial team has selected up to 10 statements per topic that summarise the discussions in the different groups. At the end of each of the two rounds of discussion, all participants were asked to prioritise the statements summarized by the editorial team in a voting procedure. The voting was moderated by **Caterine Schwierz** and **Felix Oldenburg** from IFOK.

On the second conference day, a selected speaker reported a summary of the working group results to the plenary. Consequently, the topics have been discussed by a **sounding panel** that consisted of two parliamentarians, one administrator, and a civil society representative:

- **Anders Wijkman**, Member of the European Parliament from Sweden since 1999 for the Christian Democrats;
- **Winfried Hermann**, Green parliamentarian in the German Bundestag and member of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for SD;
- **Wolfram Tertschnig**, co-chair the ESDN Steering Group (together with Ms. Freytag), and head of department for SD in the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
- **Frans Evers**, chair of the EEAC and Member of the Dutch Advisory council RMNO.

The panel discussion was facilitated by **Reinhard Steurer** from the ESDN Office.

After a topical overview, **this section documents the statements submitted by the working groups** and summarized by the editorial team, the **outcomes of the voting procedures**, the **reports to the plenary** and the **panel discussion** for each of the four topics.

3.2 Overview of the four working group topics

The topics and guiding questions that were outlined in [Discussion Paper I](#) and discussed in the working groups can be summarised as follows.

Topic 1	Vertical integration by guiding politicians and administrators at other governmental levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could the renewed EU SDS guide politicians and administrators in the Member States (and vice versa)? • How could national SD strategies guide politicians and administrators at sub-national levels (and vice versa)?
Topic 2	Horizontal integration by involving politicians across ministries/departments and parliamentarians: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which structures and mechanisms help to involve politicians (including parliamentarians) in SD strategy processes? • How could the link between politicians and administrators be improved across ministries/departments?
Topic 3	The added value of SD strategies for politicians: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the added value of SD strategies for politicians in comparison to policy-making with sectoral strategies? • How could the added value of SD strategies be communicated to politicians? How could the “political visibility” of SD strategies be improved?
Topic 4	The engagement of political actors in a wider sense : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do SD strategies deal with conflicts between relevant political actors in a wider sense? • How could SD strategies become “more strategic” by better engaging political actors in a wider sense?

3.3 Working group results and summary of the panel discussions

Topic 1	Vertical integration by guiding politicians and administrators at other governmental levels
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Moderators: *Maggie Charnley* (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, UK), *Monika Frieling* (Federal Foreign Office, Germany), *Jürgen Solms* (German Council for SD), *Elisabeth Freytag* (Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water, Austria), *Ursula Kopp* (ESDN Office)

Number of tables and participants: 5 Tables, 50 Participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

How could the renewed EU SDS guide national politicians and administrations most effectively?	%	
1. Integrate the EU SDS into specific debates on national levels.	33	<div><div></div></div>
2. Give the EU SDS more importance within the EU itself.	18	<div><div></div></div>
3. Update NSDS in line with EU SDS. Coordinate/synchronize reporting.	15	<div><div></div></div>
4. Translate the topics into short messages (such as 20-20-20).	12	<div><div></div></div>
5. EU and NSDS should refer to each others' targets and deadlines for mutual encouragement.	10	<div><div></div></div>
6. Peer reviews help to involve all policy levels.	8	<div><div></div></div>
7. Administrators need to raise politicians' awareness of the EU SDS.	6	<div><div></div></div>
8. Involve several council formations in the EU SDS process.	4	<div><div></div></div>
9. We need a new institution on vertical integration (<i>disagreement</i>).	3	<div><div></div></div>
10. EU SDS should cover the social dimension within all topics.	2	<div><div></div></div>

How can national SD strategies guide politicians and administrators at sub-national levels most effectively?	%	
1. Create consciousness nation-wide through: regional SD forums, sets of indicators, demonstration projects.	18	<div><div></div></div>
2. Better coordination/implementation at local level (LA 21) – communicate to higher levels; build on this when reviewing NSDS.	16	<div><div></div></div>
3. The NSDS must agree on targets and timetables with sub-national levels.	16	<div><div></div></div>
4. Make a performance ranking of sub-national SD strategies.	10	<div><div></div></div>
5. Sectoral linkages between national and sub-national levels i.e. planning.	10	<div><div></div></div>
6. Innovative institutional arrangements with the sub-national level.	8	<div><div></div></div>
7. Share best practice between regions; tool kits for Member States.	7	<div><div></div></div>
8. SD Councils with actors from sub-nat. levels foster mutual learning.	6	<div><div></div></div>
9. Need to have tools for sharing information vertically, incl. new media.	5	<div><div></div></div>
10. It helps when regional and local authorities meet and stay in touch.	4	<div><div></div></div>

Report to the plenary by Monika Frieling (Federal Foreign Office, Germany)

Monika Frieling summarized the discussion to both guiding questions on vertical integration (see above). She emphasized that the international level should not be cold-shouldered when

- Debates of the EU SDS on the national level are a good way forward, however, smaller and more concrete steps are required;
- Within the EU, more political support for the EU SDS is needed; and
- A nationwide consciousness of SD issues needs to be created.

Regarding the integration of the EU SDS into national debates, Mr. Hermann emphasized that the renewed EU SDS is being discussed in the German Bundestag. Though this is not the case in all European countries, it was emphasized that this could change in the near future, for example by establishing climate change committees that are composed of members of various other committees.

To give the EU SDS more political support within the EU, it was suggested to re-think some of the traditional frameworks and, for example, integrate the now separated committees responsible for the EU SDS and the Lisbon strategy.

Furthermore, the panellists noticed a lack of public debate on SD that is also reflected in a lack of discussion between politicians, businesses and the society. Parliaments should stimulate the public debate on SD and should call for SD monitoring. Furthermore, new procedures and mechanisms for vertical integration are needed. Mr. Tertschnig suggested that the ESDN could play a significant role in overcoming the challenges of vertical integration.

Topic 2	Horizontal integration by involving politicians across ministries/departments and parliamentarians
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Moderators: *Sven Vaneycken* (Federal Public Planning Service SD, Belgium), *Gerald Berger* (ESDN Office), *Albert Statz* (Ministry for the Environment, Germany)

Number of tables and participants: 3 Tables, 29 Participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

Which structures and mechanisms work best to involve politicians in your country's SD strategy process?	%	
1. One institution to coordinate government ministries	28,4	<div><div></div></div>
2. Overcoming sectoral „tunnel vision“ of ministers in office	18,6	<div><div></div></div>
3. Defining SD for different ministries to increase ownership for integrated policy-making	17,6	<div><div></div></div>
4. Involving parliamentarians early in elaborating SDS to commit them	17,6	<div><div></div></div>
5. Formal cooperation between ministries to foster informal cooperation	8,8	<div><div></div></div>
6. Inter-ministerial networks to spark new and streamline SD thinking	8,8	<div><div></div></div>

What is the most effective way of improving the link between politicians and administrators in the context of SD strategies?	%	
1. Creating stable legal and institutional framework (e.g. through act of parliament) for SD programming	24,3	<div><div></div></div>
2. Improving information exchange between ministries, create formal strategic alliances on SD topics	16,5	<div><div></div></div>
3. Using decision tools (analytical frameworks, sustainability impact assessments)	14,6	<div><div></div></div>
4. Creating dialogue platforms for SD vision/strategies to unite and build trust	9,7	<div><div></div></div>
5. Involving ministries in parliament reviews and committees (force to participate)	7,8	<div><div></div></div>
6. Increase level of information through training for civil servants, politicians, parl.	6,8	<div><div></div></div>
7. Using peer reviews to involve government and parliamentarians at high level	6,8	<div><div></div></div>
8. Using positive competition between ministries to mainstream / create new ideas	5,8	<div><div></div></div>
9. Linking to parliament with inter-ministerial monitoring/implementation task force	5,8	<div><div></div></div>
10. Civil servants use SD to give politicians a stage	1,9	<div><div></div></div>

Summary report to the plenary by Gerald Berger (ESDN Office)

Summarizing the discussion on topic 2, Gerald Berger focused on the most effective ways of improving the link between administrators and politicians (the second guiding question), and the concluded that

- Suggestions for a clear outline of how to involve different institutions are required;
- Strategic alliances on SD topics can create and improve capacities and foster early information exchange;
- Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) should be used more frequently and the institutional setup in governments (in particular between ministries) could be improved.

He furthermore emphasized the importance of translating the meaning of SD for different ministries.

Summary of the sounding panel discussion:

The panellists acknowledged that horizontal integration is still an issue that needs more attention in many countries. Parliamentary advisory councils that are broad in competence and thinking could foster integrated policy making. In this context, it was emphasized that enhancing capacities, i.e. through education and training of administrative staff, is crucial. However, in reality institutions often cannot afford to release their staff from work for further education.

Topic 3 | The added value of SD strategies for politicians

Moderators: *Yvonne Scherer* (German Council for SD), *Heinrich Lang* (Austrian Court of Audit), *André Martinuzzi* (ESDN Office)

Number of tables and participants: 3 Tables, 30 Participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

What do you think is currently the most convincing value added of SD strategies for politicians in your country?	%	
1. SDS help create a coherent set of objectives, targets and indicators	28,4	<div><div></div></div>
2. SD reporting and monitoring forces ministries to communicate and to work together	16,7	<div><div></div></div>
3. SDS help to integrate topics into sectoral strategies	15,7	<div><div></div></div>
4. SDS create win-win-win opportunities on higher level of complexity	11,8	<div><div></div></div>
5. Sectoral politics usually are short term, SDS more long term.	9,8	<div><div></div></div>
6. Value added is often only potentially as long as politicians don't pay enough attention	6,9	<div><div></div></div>
7. SDS as important point of reference for councils, NGOs and others	3,9	<div><div></div></div>
8. SDS help raise attention among the public and politicians	3,9	<div><div></div></div>
9. SD advisory bodies foster the long term perspective.	2,9	<div><div></div></div>

What will increase the „political visibility“ of SD strategies most effectively?	%	
1. Linking SD issues to topical political themes (climate change, population development) and to other words (e.g. responsibility)	37,7	<div><div></div></div>
2. Establishing coherent indicators for regional and national comparison	17	<div><div></div></div>
3. Integrating parliaments through regular reports, annual SD debates, scrutiny mechanisms	12,3	<div><div></div></div>
4. Attract politicians to SD issues via the media/ public opinion	12,3	<div><div></div></div>
5. Stop calling it SD and find a new phrase (disagreement)	5,7	<div><div></div></div>
6. Exposing unsustainable development attracts public attention.	5,7	<div><div></div></div>
7. Pursue long term-issues with projects also relevant short-term.	3,8	<div><div></div></div>
8. International events and developments are important.	3,8	<div><div></div></div>
9. SD policies and implementation fosters new ways of policy making in general	1,9	<div><div></div></div>

Report to the plenary by André Martinuzzi (ESDN Office)

Summarizing the first discussion round on assessing the added value of SD strategies, André Martinuzzi mentioned that SD strategies (i) establish a coherent set of objectives and targets, (ii) create win-win-win situations and (iii) help focus on long-term challenges. In this context, André Martinuzzi pointed to the obvious connection between SD strategies and tools of “new governance” or “strategic public management”.

Commenting on the second discussion round on communicating the value added of SD strategies, Martinuzzi pointed out that the following strategies may help:

- Linking SD to topical themes;

- Establishing indicators for regional and national comparisons;
- Selling SD by integrating parliaments into the implementation process; and
- Making SD interesting for the media.

Regarding the attractiveness of SD for the media, Martinuzzi raised the question whether politicians are leaders or followers.

Summary of the sounding panel discussion:

The panel discussants suggested that policy-making should follow a strategic cycle that includes monitoring schemes so that decision-making processes become more transparent for the public. Monitoring and transparency are also necessary to see what has worked and to facilitate policy learning.

The panellists acknowledged that SD encounters a political dilemma because SD policies often have winners *and* losers. One panellist argued that politicians often hesitate to address problems and tackle necessary reforms because they fear to lose votes.

Answering the question raised by André Martinuzzi, one panellist argued that politicians are not sales people, but rather follow what people and newspapers are saying to them. Unfortunately, journalists do not understand the concept of SD. Thus, the concept of SD needs to be promoted by people who know how to sell things. A good way to sell a product is to make use of simple and strong statements, such as “companies who will make it in the future are those that implement SD”.











Topic 4	SD strategies and the engagement of political actors in a wider sense
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Moderators: *Daniel Wachter* (Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE, Switzerland), *Markus Hametner* (ESDN Office), *Dorothee Braun* (German Council for SD), *Pedro Barbosa* (European Commission)

Number of tables and participants: 4 Tables, 40 Participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

In the context of SD, what is the most common practice of dealing with conflicts between political stakeholders?	%	
1. Responsibility for SD should not be in ONE ministry (e.g. Environment), but on higher level	32,4	████████████████████
2. Focussing on positive aspects (competitiveness) is helpful for integrating stakeholders	18,1	██████████
3. Integrating SD into legal framework and the constitution guarantees continuity	13,3	██████
4. Integration of political actors in a wider sense is difficult, but important ...	10,5	█████
5. Focus on one issue – but don't forget SD as an umbrella	7,6	████
6. Conflict of targets have to be overcome (subsidies coal/agriculture)	7,6	████
7. Integration of political actors in a wider sense is difficult, but important ...	5,7	███
8. The level of action (global, EU, national, business) is decisive for focussing (single issue vs. integration)	4,8	██

What is the best way to involve „political actors in a wider sense“ in SD strategies?	%	
1. ALL Actors have to be integrated in the debate – but mind the different languages and political cultures.	18,4	
2. The SDS public profile has to be raised formally and informally – use best practices as well as Bono, Al Gore and others as ambassadors.	16,5	
3. More coherence between Lisbon & SDS is needed, SD impact assessments might help.	15,5	
4. Integrate SD into government / EU programmes to mainstream SD.	14,6	
5. Economic instruments have to be used (e.g. intern. of external costs).	12,6	
6. Ensure that SDS is relevant/interesting by addressing trade-offs & synergies.	6,8	
7. An open forum or permanent dialogue should be established.	5,8	
8. Use SD councils as facilitator for early stage engagement.	4,9	
9. Civil society has to force commitments by high level officials.	2,9	
10. Economic competition will not promote SD.	1,9	

Report to the plenary by Daniel Wachter (Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development)

Daniel Wachter summarized the discussion on how to engage political actors in a wider sense by pointing to the following top ranked statements:

- A general debate on SD should involve all actors
- Stakeholders should be involved in preparing political decisions to raise awareness and create advocacy coalitions

Summary of the sounding panel discussion:

One panellist emphasized that SD discussions have emerged in the political arena in recent years, for example in SD communities in parliaments, among NGO's and businesses. However, a broad discussion about SD is still missing because the mentioned communities are still too small. Another panellist mentioned that a way forward for political parties would be to embrace SD as a future-oriented political concept. However, it was argued that the media "is not helping us in communicating SD".

Regarding the building of strategic alliances, it was suggested to look at SD as a concept with a considerable potential for innovations. This would raise the attention of businesses because they have a growing interest in innovation.

4. Stimulating informed debate in society: results of the second breakout session

4.1 Procedural issues

The second breakout session followed the same format as the first one (see section 3), except for the fact that it consisted of three (not four) topics of discussion (namely NSDCs as advisors, agents and communicators; for details, see the [Discussion Paper II](#) provided by the [EEAC](#)). Likewise, the three topics were discussed by different groups in parallel. Each working group discussion consisted of two rounds (45 minutes each), the first one addressing status and the second one outlook issues, both guided by a moderator.

Based on the input from the different groups, the editorial team has again selected up to 10 statements per topic that summarise the discussions in the different groups. At the end of each of the two rounds of discussion, all participants were asked to prioritise the statements summarized by the editorial team in a voting procedure. In the voting procedure of the second round participants were asked to prioritize the statements twice, first regarding “feasibility” (A), second regarding “impact” (B). The tables below rank the statements in line with their sum score. Although a feasible action is often not the one with the highest impact, one can argue that the most relevant actions are those that are both feasible and strong regarding impact.

On the second conference day, selected speakers reported a summary of the working group results to the plenary (because of time constraints, all speakers focused on the top-three statements of the second outlook round). After the three reports, **the same panel** consisting of the parliamentarians Anders Wijkman and Winfried Hermann, the administrator Wolfram Tertschnig and the civil society representative Frans Evers **discussed some fundamental questions regarding the political role of NSDCs** raised by the facilitator Reinhard Steurer from the ESDN Office.

This section documents the **statements on the three roles of NSDCs** submitted by the working groups and summarized by the editorial team, the **outcomes of the voting procedures**, the **reports to the plenary** and the **panel discussion**.

4.2 Working group results

Topic 1	SD Councils as advisors
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Moderators: *Jürgen Solms* (German Council for SD), *Rita Trattinig* (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria), *Dorothee Braun* (German Council for SD), *Ursula Kopp* (ESDN Office), *Jerzy Pienkowski* (European Commission), *André-Jean Guerin* (Ministry of Environment, France), *Annika Lindblom* (Ministry of Environment, Finland)

Number of tables and participants: 7 tables, 68 participants

Topic 2 | SD Councils as agents

Moderators: *Sauli Rouhinen* (Finnish National Commission on SD), *Elisabeth Vitzthum* (Ministry of Finance, Austria), *Inge Lardinois* (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Netherlands), *Gerald Berger* (ESDN Office), *Ingeborg Niestroy* (EEAC Office)

Number of tables and participants: 5 tables, 50 participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

Which statement describes best the current work of your country's SD council as an agent?	%	
1. Make contributions to the NSDS process (action plans, forums, visions...)	34,7	<div><div></div></div>
2. The "watchdog" function enforces commitments	12,6	<div><div></div></div>
3. Clear mandate for fulfilling agent function is missing	11,6	<div><div></div></div>
4. Get opinion leaders together to produce lines of action	8,4	<div><div></div></div>
5. Help bridge the gap between elected politicians and civil servants	7,4	<div><div></div></div>
6. Communication sometimes gives only "cosmetic" results in govt. action	7,4	<div><div></div></div>
7. Key target groups are the decision makers (different Govt. departments,..)	7,4	<div><div></div></div>
8. Make the translation between long term and short term actions	5,3	<div><div></div></div>
9. Facilitate the peer review process (NL) - as agent and communicator	3,2	<div><div></div></div>
10. Composition of the Council is not always in line with the tasks (i. e. business not sufficiently involved)	2,1	<div><div></div></div>

When working as an agent between sectors, institutions and interests, what kind of action ...	A	B	SUM	
A) ... will be most feasible?				
B) ... will have the most impact for SD councils?				
1. Address gaps or problems of governmental policies	26	25	51,1	<div><div></div></div>
2. Help align sectoral strategies with SD concept	15	19	33,8	<div><div></div></div>
3. Take up the „watch dog“ function; assess government's SD performance	9,7	15	25,1	<div><div></div></div>
4. Find workable organizational structure; develop working methods that are attractive for stakeholders	13	7,7	20,6	<div><div></div></div>
5. Include different government levels (regional, local, international) in the Council	12	8,8	20,6	<div><div></div></div>
6. Monitor the SDS implementation, incl. assessing targets	11	8,8	19,6	<div><div></div></div>
7. Broaden the Councils' composition; including and/or addressing business	3,2	6,6	9,8	<div><div></div></div>
8. Organisation of research programs for SD (joint efforts with funding bodies)	5,4	3,3	8,7	<div><div></div></div>
9. Take care of the local activities; encourage municipalities	4,3	4,4	8,7	<div><div></div></div>
10. Globalise the thematic perspective; more experienced SDCs to share their knowledge with new countries	1,1	1,1	2,2	<div><div></div></div>

Report to the plenary by Sauli Rouhinen (Finnish National Commission on SD)

Sauli Rouhinen also commented on the three top ranked answers to the guiding question “What kind of action will be most feasible/have the most impact of NSDCs as agents between sectors, institutions and interests?”, namely

- Address gaps/problems of governmental policies (he added that this refers to the identification of problems and how they can be overcome);
- Help align sectoral strategies with the SD concept;
- Take up the “watch dog” function by assessing the SD performance of governments.

He pointed out that networks with other societal actors could foster the role of NSDCs as agents.

Topic 3	SD Councils as communicators
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Moderators: *Yvonne Scherer* (German Council for SD), *Markus Hametner* (ESDN Office), *André Martinuzzi* (ESDN Office)

Number of tables and participants: 3 tables, 30 participants

Voting results on key statements summarised by the editorial team:

Which statement describes best the current role of your country's SD as a communicator to the public?	%	
1. Address different target groups with different formats of communication	18,4	
2. Raising public interest and knowledge about SD strategies and themes	14,3	
3. Main issue is to communicate to federal ministries and politicians.	14,3	
4. Councils need to be independent from governments (although they might get a funding) to ensure credibility in the public	13,3	
5. Councils reach only a part of the public.	11,2	
6. Developing tools for communication to the public (e.g. websites, reports)	10,2	
7. Council members often address their „home institutions“ rather than the public	9,2	
8. Councils transfer complex ideas into living action but sometimes fail when the message is too complex	5,1	
9. Prepare an easy-to-read brochure about "what can I as individual do for SD"	4,1	

The panellists also referred to the “watch dog” function that should be taken up by NSDCs increasingly by providing critical advice to governments. Currently, only the UK’s SD Commission has an official role as a “watch dog”.

Advisory capacities:

The second topic discussed was the influence of NSDCs as advisors. One panellist argued that NSDCs should have a “foot in the door” in the various policy decisions, thus should be oriented towards concrete policy issues. In other words, the advice of the NSDCs must fit the policy programme of decision-makers. Another panellist pointed out that NSDCs should take up future or long-term SD issues which are usually not discussed by governments and parliaments. This would add value to the work of NSDCs in the policy discussion.

The panellists agreed that if NSDCs want to “bring home” a message to policy-makers (who are always short on time), they need to be focussed and short in their advice (a concise 2-page summary often has more influence than a long report).

5. Innovating governance in the EU SDS: Summary of the two-fold panel discussion

The panel discussion on “Innovating governance in the EU SDS” that took place in the afternoon of the first conference day was chaired by Elisabeth Freytag (Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management). It highlighted new developments with regard to peer reviewing of SD strategies and EU SDS progress reporting. Information relevant for this session was summarised in a [Background Paper](#) provided by the [ESDN Office](#).

5.1 Peer reviewing

As highlighted in the [Background Paper](#) for this session, the idea behind peer reviewing SD strategies in the EU is to identify and share good practices in a process of mutual learning. Within the EU, the uptake of peer reviews for SD strategies was specified in the renewed EU SDS of June 2006: “With regard to the national level, the Commission report [i.e. the biannual progress report starting in September 2007] will build on Member States’ actions to implement the EU SDS and the results gained from completed Peer Reviews”.²

So far, only France completed a full peer review of its SD strategy. Experiences of this review process are well documented³ and were presented at the ESDN Conference 2006 in Salzburg. Recently, two other European countries have undertaken a peer review of their SD strategy, namely the Netherlands and Norway.⁴

² European Council (2006), http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/docs/renewed_eu_sds_en.pdf, para 37. In the context of the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, peer reviews have been explored also at the local level (for example in the context of EuroCities and UBC, both co-funded by the European Commission, see http://www.ubc-action21.net/peer_review.htm; <http://www.wien.gv.at/umweltschutz/nachhaltigkeit/rtf/presud.rtf>).

³ Brodhag, C. & Talière (2006): Sustainable Development Strategies: Tools for Policy Coherence, in: Natural Resources Forum, 30, 136-145

⁴ For more information, see the ESDN Quarterly Report on ‘Evaluation and Review of National Sustainable Development Strategies’ at http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports&report_id=2 and the Background paper on ‘Innovating governance in the EU SDS’ at http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/doc_berlin/ESDN%20Panel%20Background%20Paper-ESB07.pdf

In the respective panel discussion, representatives of the reviewed as well as the peer countries have discussed their experiences. The panellists were Inge Lardinois from the Netherlands and Albert Statz from Germany (both involved in the Dutch peer review), Anne Kristin Foslie from Norway and Lars Lundberg from Sweden (both involved in the Norwegian peer review), and Robin Mieke (DG Environment).

Robin Mieke (European Commission) emphasised that the main purpose of peer reviews is mutual learning and to link the EU SDS with national SD strategies. It is also a tool of vertical integration. He summarised experiences so far as follows:

- Based on two peer reviews (France and the Netherlands) that involved eight Member States we can say that it works! An exchange of practices and knowledge takes place both ways!
- The organisers need to have a clear idea about what and how they want to achieve.
- Conducting a peer review is a time-consuming process. This is often underestimated. Putting together the background material and organising the review is challenging.
- The fact that peer reviews involve stakeholders is important because it brings in fresh air and new ideas.

Inge Lardinois (the Netherlands) mentioned that the political circumstances were very favourable for the Dutch peer review (organised by the Dutch advisory council RMNO). It was under way during (unscheduled) election time. Due to the public discourse on climate change, SD became a key issue in the government agreement.

Some main findings of the peer review are the following:

- Unsustainable trends persist in the Netherlands.
- The Dutch Action Plan is not really an SD Strategy (it has an environmental focus and a monitoring framework was missing), but peers emphasised, “Don’t interpret SD strategies as a document, see it as a process”.
- The Netherlands does not have a coordinating SD body.

Inge Lardinois also mentioned the following lessons learned:

- Although It is important to plan a peer review, this often turn out differently.
- The scoping meeting is important to have a clear idea about the focus of the review.
- Key politicians should be involved (e.g. the Prime Minister).

Albert Statz (Germany) mentioned that the (German) peers have learned a lot about both the Dutch and the German system: “You learn to see your own strategy in different ways”. One of the main success factors was that the Dutch government wanted a critical assessment of their own strategy. He confirmed that the Dutch peer review took place in a rare political window of opportunity, and he concluded that the timing of a peer review within the political election cycle is a crucial success factor. Overall, he formulated the following recommendations:

- Well-prepared background documents are important.
- A peer review takes longer than one expects, so plan for enough time.
- In order to keep the time-burden reasonable a peer review should focus on some well-defined issues.
- The EU SDS has to be introduced into the national discourse.

Kristin Fosli (Norway) explained that the Norwegian peer review was relatively short (16 months in total, 4 months of intense work) and that it resulted in a renewed SD strategy. The peers acknowledged positively that placing SD in the Ministry of Finance was a good idea and that the Norwegian age policy is generous. The lessons learned can be summarised as follows:

- Although the process was short and efficient, it was a burden.
- A good preparation of the peers is important.
- Involving stakeholders brings in new aspects.

Lars Lundberg (Sweden) confirmed that Norway adopted an open attitude and was interested in critical comments. Thus, the peers were solely responsible for the final report. The main finding was that Norwegian SD policies should become more European (in particular with regard to the EU SDS, energy and climate policy). What were the lessons learned?

- The process is demanding and one should think about ways that make it lighter (for example by focussing on particular issues).
- More time towards the end of the process would have helped for more substantive discussions.

5.2 EU SDS progress reporting

As outlined in the [Background Paper](#) for this session, the EU SDS introduced a two-year reporting cycle in order to keep track of the implementation process in Member States. It works as follows: Member States are requested to submit progress reports every two years about “the necessary input on progress at the national level in accordance with NSDS”⁵. Member States appointed SDS Coordinators who are mainly responsible for the coordination of reporting on the implementation of the EU SDS in their country (“internal role”), and for the exchange between the European Commission and the Member States (“external role”). The first progress reports by the Member States are due in June 2007.⁶

The panel discussing EU SDS progress reporting consisted of Marcel Haag (Secretariat General, European Commission) and the SDS Coordinators’ Group members Igor Strmsnik (Slovenia), Christoph Müller (Austria) and Otto van Sandick (the Netherlands).

Marcel Haag pointed out that the Secretariat General is currently preparing the stocktaking of what has happened since the adoption of the EU SDS in June 2006. A Eurostat report on SD indicators and the reports of the SDS Coordinators are crucial inputs for the Commission’s report that is scheduled for September 2007. He confirmed that the report will be a critical analysis of the EU SDS implementation, but that not all subjects will be covered equally (the prioritisation will depend on the MS reports). In December 2007, the European Council will then revisit the EU SDS based on the Commission’s Report.

Christoph Müller mentioned that the Austrian country report (scheduled for the end of June 2007) will cover the EU SDS, the Lisbon agenda, educational issues and good governance, and that it will be longer than expected. He said that writing the report together is a collaborate effort of the Chancellery, the Environment Ministry, the Finance Ministry, and others.

Otto van Sandick from the Netherlands said that the reporting template provided by the Secretariat General is very useful, but he also indicated that the report will be longer than the expected 25 pages.

Igor Strmsnik mentioned that Slovenia has a unique SD governance set-up and that integrated approaches may be easier to achieve in a small country. However, he also mentioned that the Minister of Development lost support by the Prime Minister and had to resign after three months in office.

⁵ European Council (2006), http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/docs/renewed_eu_sds_en.pdf, para. 37.

⁶ For more information, see the ESDN Quarterly Report on ‘The EU SDS Process in the Member States’ at http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports&report_id=4 and the Background paper on ‘Innovating governance in the EU SDS’ at http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/doc_berlin/ESDN%20Panel%20Background%20Paper-ESB07.pdf

6. Practising continuity

The concluding session on “practising continuity” was moderated by **Ursula Kopp** from the ESDN Office, and it was devoted to activities within the ESDN and an outlook by the German Hosts and the chairs of the ESDN Steering Group.

At the beginning, **Maggie Charnley**, the UK representative in the ESDN Steering Group, briefly summarised activities that have taken place within the ESDN since the last annual conference in Salzburg 2006. She mentioned that it is only about a year ago that networking activities within the ESDN have been stepped year round, in particular by establishing the ESDN Office (a network support mechanism) at RIMAS at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. She mentioned that the ESDN Office is financed by eight European countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK). She then summarised some key activities of the ESDN Office since its existence, such as the launch of the on-stop-shop website on SD strategies in Europe at www.sd-network.eu. She also invited ESDN members to contact the ESDN Office for individual support.

After the introduction on ESDN activities, participants were invited to discuss the following three questions in small groups

1. How do you or how could you make use of the ESDN?
2. What could we improve on the ESDN website (in particular with respect to the country profiles)?
3. What new exchange format would you like to see within the ESDN (for example small thematic/regional workshops, country exchange visits). Would you be interested in participating, or even contributing actively?

The group discussions were facilitated by ESDN Steering Group and ESDN Office members, and their notes will help them to develop networking activities further.

The conference was concluded by Berthold Goeke from the German Federal Chancellery and the co-chairs of the ESDN, Wolfram Tertschnig and Elisabeth Freytag from the Austrian Environment Ministry.

In his concluding remarks, **Berthold Goeke** emphasized that the ESB07 Conference was regarded as being the highlight of the German EU presidency concerning SD. He was pleased with the lively networking and the progress towards SD in the EU Member States and the European Commission that became visible during the event. However, Mr. Goeke also pointed out that there is, of course, room for improvement. With the message “keep on working and keep on hoping that political leaders will take up SD”, he passed the baton to the incoming Portuguese EU presidency.

Viriato Soromenho-Marques presented the priorities of the Portuguese EU presidency, namely (i) indicators for the renewed EU SDS, (ii) the EU SDS progress report and (iii) the revision of the EU SDS. He furthermore presented the three priority areas Climate Change, Water and Biodiversity in more detail. Regarding Climate Change, the PT presidency will work on preparing the Bali meeting and on reaching a global deal for emissions after 2012. Regarding water, the presidency will launch a discussion about the problem of water scarcity, especially in southern European countries. As regards biodiversity, Portugal will host a conference on biodiversity and strengthen biodiversity in the context of the EU SDS.

Acting as co-chairs of the ESDN Steering Group, **Elisabeth Freytag** and **Wolfram Tertschnig** closed the conference. They emphasized that the ESDN has evolved into a lively network of 30 countries with most of the EU Member States on board. They also highlighted that the EU SDS as well as the mandate of the SDS Coordinators group refer to the ESDN as useful networking

mechanism. Because the networking activities of the ESDN and the work of the ESDN Office proved to be useful, they announced that the ESDN Steering Group gave them the mandate to negotiate another two-year contract with RIMAS at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration that operates the ESDN Office. Finally, they thanked the German hosts (in particular the German Council for Sustainable Development and the German Chancellery) for organizing, and IFOK, the ESDN Office staff and all moderators for supporting the event.