

Greening Sustainable Development Strategies
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ON THE EU SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – VIEWS OF THE CONSULTATIVE FORUM

The Forum has contributed to the ongoing process to develop a Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) for the EU in several steps. A letter to Mr Prodi and the relevant Commissioners connected with the SDS work (“The Prodi group”) was sent last summer. It contained basic elements of how the Forum viewed the SDS challenge. Expanding on some of the issues raised then it is important to stress:

- Sustainability should be seen in its full multi-dimensionality (environmental, socio-economic, cultural)
- The 6 EAP should in this context be seen as “the environmental arm” of the broader SDS and be connected to it.
- Sustainability should not be regarded as an “add on” to economic policy but should instead be seen as a pivotal strategic element for European long term competitiveness
- Sustainability may require new forms of governance. In fact the demands from sustainable development may in itself be seen as compelling arguments to find appropriate forms of multilayered governance patterns in Europe, in addition to the incentives that come from other more general considerations, as needs for participatory and democratic institutions.
- In finding appropriate forms for sectoral integration – which indeed is one important aspect of the sustainability challenge – different benchmarking procedures need to be developed.
- The development of a EU SDS also puts demands for a global perspective. Such a necessary embedding also calls for finding appropriate forms for European leadership at the global level in the SD domain.

In the further elaboration around the SDS theme the Forum finalised in October a position paper on SDS in addition to papers on 6 EAP and on spatial issues. These papers add to earlier positions made e.g. on governance, integrated product policies (IPP), enlargement, as well as ongoing development of positions on climate change, research policy etc.

From these general developments emerge basic elements of view, with regard to the movement towards the forthcoming Göteborg Summit. The Forum views the sequence of Summits from Cardiff and onwards as providers of important steps on the path to sustainability in a European context. Important facets are:

- The emphasis on sectoral integration, where the Cardiff impetus should be seen as important and in need of further efforts to be followed up
- The Lisbon social dimensions that has to be integrated with the other elements of sustainability
- The Governance development activity emerging from the last few Summits and which in the view of the Forum should be connected to the SDS stream
- The goals and priority setting mechanisms have to be evolved, not the least in connection to institutional new mechanisms that could monitor, give advice and take initiatives at high level in the EU for the sake of Sustainability. Such mechanisms should be designed to connect ongoing similar activities in the member countries with similar related efforts at the EU-level. The Forum has taken initiative to suggest in its governance position paper that a Sustainability Council be created for such purposes. It should assist the European Council and the Council of Ministers not the least in monitoring the progress of the implementation measures aiming at sustainability. It could in an operative sense, that safeguards sufficient independence, in an appropriate way be linked to the President of the European Commission, and be based on a system of national “Sustainability Ombudsmen”.
- The global dimension has to be integrated in the forthcoming SDS in a visionary, visible, understandable and mobilising way.

Addendum:

The European Consultative Forum On The Environment and Sustainable Development is:

- established by the EU Commission
- members are appointed for 4 years by the Commission on individual merit
- advising the Commission and providing input to the public debate through a broad and open “outside” communication by documents, newsletter etc
- secretariat attached to DG ENV (forum@cec.eu.int)
- <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/forum/home.htm>