



Highlights from the EEAC Working Groups

WG Energy

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference "Towards Sustainable European Infrastructure" (2009)

Chair: Christian Hey, German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU).

During 2009 the WG Energy is preparing the EEAC Annual Conference and Statement. The tentative title is "Towards Sustainable European Infrastructure" and the focus is transport, energy and green networks. The draft statement links to the EEAC statement 2008 "Sustaining Europe for a long way ahead" and addresses fundamental aspects of a transition to a sustainable European infrastructure. The conference is organized on 22-24 October in Dubrovnik. It is hosted by the Croatian Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection (SORZO), who also organizes a special side-event, "Risk Prevention from Maritime Oil and Gas Transport", on 22 October.

Work shop "10% Agrofuels, a wise choice?" (2008)

Chair: Christian Hey, SRU (DE).

The core topic for WG Energy 2008 was biomass. In January 2008: the WG Energy arranged a workshop with the title "10% Agrofuels, a wise choice?" It was arranged within the frame of the EU's Sustainable Energy Week. In a special session at the 15th EEAC Annual Conference in Évora (Portugal) in October 2008 EEAC members had raised their concern about discussed targets for agrofuels. Many EEAC councils had also recently produced statements and reports on this topic. The workshop brought the results and discussions of the councils together in order to inform the Brussels community on the analysis of experts, scientists and stakeholders in member states. One central conclusion from the seminar was that the target is appropriate only under certain conditions, such as the availability and respect of sustainability criteria.

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference "Energy Efficiency. Key pillar for a competitive, secure and environmentally friendly European Energy Policy (2006-2007)

Chair: Christian Hey, SRU (DE).

The WG Energy played a central role in 2007 for the 15th EEAC Annual Conference on Energy Efficiency in Evora (Portugal) that was hosted by the Portuguese National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS). The WG Energy prepared the EEAC Statement "Energy Efficiency. Key pillar for a competitive, secure and environmentally friendly European Energy Policy" that was launched at this occasion. The statement concludes that: The Lisbon growth agenda, the EU sustainability agenda and the global security agenda all depend on urgent action to establish a more stable, secure and sustainable energy policy for the future. A policy approach pushing EU to become the most eco-efficient region would also place EU industry in a better position to meet future global demand for energy efficient products. Energy efficiency is the largest factor in reducing CO2 emissions in the near and medium term. The Commissions Action Plan on energy efficiency aims at raising energy efficiency by 20 % until 2020. We think potentials are much larger, but alert that already existing target requires strong and decisive actions by governments. Crucial areas are: a strong EU ETS and highly energy efficient buildings and products in the European market.

In December 2006 the WG Chair, Christian Hey, together with the Steering Committee chair, Frans Evers, addressed a letter to Angela Merkel in her capacity as head of the EU Presidency during the first semester in 2007. The letter stated that energy efficiency should be considered a top priority for the EU energy policy agenda.

WG Statement 70/30 "Towards European targets for Greenhouse Gas Reduction 2050 and 2020" (2005)

Chair: Christian Hey, SRU (DE).

In 2005 the WG Energy produced a WG statement calling for reinforced EU leadership for post Kyoto targets. In this statement nine EEAC councils recommend that the EU should politically commit to targets of at least 30% reduction of Greenhouse Gases below 1990 levels by 2020 and at least 70% by 2050. The councils justify their recommendation on the basis of recent climate science evidence and economic assessment. The paper was considered as an input to the forthcoming spring summit of the European Council.

WG Sustainable Development

Exploring new economic structures and the relation between EU SD and Lisbon strategies (2009)

Chair: Tim O'Riordan, Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), UK.

The WG is following-up of the EEAC statement 2008, looking into new economic structures and the future of the Lisbon and SD strategy. It is producing a short position paper on the scope for renewing the Lisbon Strategy by incorporating the essence of sustainability as well and the key arguments of the SDC (UK) paper called Prosperity without Growth? This new analysis is also based on the Statement and some of its theme papers, as well as on work from individual councils. One purpose of the paper is to serve as input for the European Sustainable Development Network conference in Prague (June 2009) as well as for the European Environment Agency research dissemination seminar in Copenhagen (June 2009). The WG also regularly exchanges knowledge, experience and views with the Sustainable Development Observatory.

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference "Sustaining Europe for a long way ahead" and the Bordeaux declaration (2008)

Co-chairs: Michel Ricard, French National Council for Sustainable Development (CNDD), and Tim O'Riordan, SDC (UK).

In preparation for the EEAC Annual conference 2008, the Working Group developed the EEAC Statement "Sustaining Europe for a long way ahead, Making long-term sustainable development policies work", which looks into challenges for the long-term policy making in Europe. The statement emphasizes that addressing the very long term through the lens of sustainable development is a matter of urgency. The capacity and effectiveness of present day governing institutions for designing and creating sustainable futures for Europe, and to bettering the resilience for the planet as a whole and its citizens, needs to be significantly increased.

The WG also prepared a Background Paper, designed to provide more analysis and supporting evidence for the Statement. The Background Paper was issued on behalf of the WG members only, without councils' endorsement. The WG also, partly in collaboration with others and with other Working Groups, prepared Theme Papers on eight key topics: governance, social justice, demography, markets, education, culture, diversity, and budgets. They analyse how suitably fashioned these key themes/ways of working are for promoting a sustainable long term.

At the annual plenary session of EEAC held in Bordeaux on 11 October 2008, representatives of national environmental and sustainable development councils decided to give their view on the financial situation in the context of the statement "Sustaining Europe for a long way ahead". As a result the Bordeaux declaration was created. It is addressed to the Council of the EU and the European Commission, as well as to national governments.

Input to the EU SDS and analysis of SD councils' role in stimulating debate (2006-2007)

Co-chairs: Günther Bachmann, German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), and Derek Osborn, SDC (UK).

In 2006 the WG produced the dialogue paper, "Getting it straight and keeping up the pressure", to feed into the ongoing EU SD Strategy review process. It was discussed by the EEAC Steering Committee and submitted to the Austrian Presidency and the EU Commission.

During 2007 the WG followed-up on the EU Sustainable Development Strategy by participating in the European Sustainability Berlin Conference during the German Presidency of the EU. It also followed up of the SD Strategy peer review in the Netherlands that had just been finalised and presented the Background Paper "Stimulating informed debate: Sustainable Development Councils in EU member states - a compilation of tasks, capacities, and best practice", a study on the role of SD councils stimulating informed debate and involving civil society. A special background paper was drafted for the WG.

Comparative study on SD strategies (2005)

Author: Ingeborg Niestroy, Secretary General, EEAC.

Sustaining Sustainability analyses the national strategies for sustainable development in nine EU member states, with a particular focus on the role of national councils for sustainable development (SDC) in producing and implementing SD strategies (SDS). The study was financed by the participating councils and supported by EEAC.

WG Governance

Theme paper and Report on Governance of long-term decision-making (2007-2009)

Chair: Roel in 't Veld, the Dutch Advisory Council for Research and Spatial Planning, Nature and the Environment (RMNO).

In 2008 the WG focused on giving input to the EEAC Annual Conference 2008 and the Statement "Sustaining Europe for a Long way ahead. It produced a Theme paper and input to the Background report, focusing on the question: What can be learned from best practices and worst cases about the conditions under which governments may take wise decisions with a long term perspective? The paper discusses the conditions and trade-offs related to long-term decision making, and from which actor perspectives and action strategies for the different actors involved can be obtained.

In 2009 the WG is following-up this engagement by finalizing a report on Governance of long-term decision making for the International conference "Towards Knowledge Democracy" organized by the Dutch RMNO 25-27 August 2009.

WG Statement "Impact Assessment of European Commission Policies" (2006)

Chair: Susan Owens, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP), UK.

WG Governance produced the WG Statement: "Impact Assessment of European Commission Policies: Achievements and Prospects", accompanied by a Background Paper. The paper focuses on the system impact assessment applied by the European Commission, as performed for major policy proposals since 2004. It is questioning the approach of having "integrated" assessments and scrutinises the Commission's Impact Assessment Guidelines (from June 2005), with regard to SD as objective and principle. Based on an analysis of meta-studies, the Commission's Guidelines and some case studies, the WG Governance set out some core principles to guide future impact assessments such as: transparency, quality control and a process of integration that clarifies, rather than conceals, important political choices.

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference "European Governance for the Environment" (2003)

Chair: Christian Hey, SRU (DE).

In 2001 the European Commission launched a White Paper on European Governance plus follow-up communications with consequences for environmental governance. As a response to this the WG wrote the statement "European Governance for the Environment" cautioning against an imbalanced move towards devolution and deregulation in environmental policy. The statement calls for a differentiated, problem-based and solution-oriented choice of strategies and instruments. In the process of reforming European governance, the European Commission and Parliament as well as the leaders of the EU member states need to be careful not to inadvertently reduce their future capacities for effectively solving environmental problems in an integrated and multidisciplinary manner. They should opt for a twofold strategy of careful and problem-based experimentation with new modes of environmental governance while at the same time maintaining the traditional capacity for direct regulatory intervention. The traditional capacity for direct regulation will continually be essential to quickly react to problems of immediate danger and as a fallback option in the case other steering

modes fail. Ultimately, successful environmental governance depends on increasing, not shifting the political system's capacity for environmental protection, supported by a deepened public participation.

WG Agricultural Policy and Land Use

Seminar "Land Use and the Global Economy" (2009)

Chair: Huib Silvis, Netherlands Council for the Rural Areas (RLG)

In 2009 the Working group Agriculture (WG Agri) is covering the broad subject of land use and is organising a workshop 'Land Use and Global Economy' in June, in Brussels. The seminar will give a global perspective on the topic, a theoretical approach on how to look at land use at a landscape level as input for the SD-policy process. The outcome of the seminar is meant to contribute to the EU SDS-review and the theme of the EEAC Annual Conference 2010. A programme will soon be available.

Report "Globalisation, Land Use Change and Common Agricultural Policy" and continued input to the health check of the CAP (2008)

Chair: Huib Silvis, RLG (NL)

The WG published a report "Globalisation, Land Use Change and Common Agricultural Policy" documenting the two thematic seminars organised in 2007 and the project "CAP in 27 Member States". The WG chair sent the report to Commissioners Fischer-Boel and Dimas with a letter raising awareness on the importance of monitoring and evaluating the environmental consequences of CAP. The report argues that at present, the process of evaluation by the European Commission is largely designed to determine whether policies are achieving their intended objectives rather than evaluating their ultimate outcomes.

The WG Agriculture continued to comment on the CAP reform, focusing on the public debate during the CAP reform process and the EU-budget and CAP. It also gave input to the WG Energy's biomass workshop.

Overview of CAP-implementation in Member States and seminars on economic drivers and on the impacts of CAP (2007)

Chair: Huib Silvis, RLG (NL)

The WG Agriculture prepared an overview of the CAP implementation in the Member States that feeds into the health check of the CAP (2007/2008), the mid-term review of the Financial Perspective 2008/2009 and the CAP beyond 2013. The RLG, has launched a website on the implementation of the CAP and visions of its future role across 27 EU Member States. It provides an overview of how EU Member States have been implementing (CAP) and what they think about its future role.

The WG also organised the two following seminars:

- 'Global Economic Drivers for Land Use Change' looked into the consequences of globalisation, world market developments and WTO-modalities for land use and land management. An external group of experts from all over Europe was involved.
- 'Assessing the impacts of the CAP' aimed at exploring what is being done, and what more should be done, to determine the environmental consequences of major changes to the CAP, such as the de-coupling of support payments from production, the introduction of environmental cross-compliance and the shift in emphasis from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2.

WG Statement Rural Development Policies for the EU (2005)

Chair: Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, RLG (NL)

This statement highlights the need for more concerted action between the EU, the Member States and local partnerships to sustain and enhance the rich and diversified rural capital of Europe. Without such action this rich capital will rapidly erode and the targets set in Gothenburg and Lisbon will not be reached. This is the key message of the EEAC to the European Commission, the European Council and the Member States concerning the new European Rural Policy during 2007 - 2013.

EEAC Statement Towards Sustainable Agricultural Policies in Europe (2002)

Chair: Mark Felton, English Nature (UK)

This statement is the result of the discussions during the 10th Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory Councils, Kilkenny, Ireland, October 2002.

EEAC has long regarded the future of agricultural policy as a crucial issue for the European environment and for sustainable development. In preparation for the Mid-Term Review of Agenda 2000 the EEAC Agriculture Working Group undertook a study on the form that a sustainable agricultural policy for Europe should take, which led to a report and to this EEAC Statement. The Working Group Report is also available and provides a valuable analysis of the issues, and a fuller explanation of the points made in the statement. It also gives practical examples of agri-environmental schemes operated in Member States.

WG Biodiversity

Contributing to Green European Networks and Sustainable Land-use (2009)

Chair: Noel Casserly, The National Sustainable Development Council (COMHAR), Ireland.

The WG is giving input on green networks to the EEAC statement in 2009 "Towards Sustainable European Infrastructure" and is also in dialogue with the WG Agriculture in the light of the proposed conference topic for 2010 "Sustainable land-use".

Follow-up of EU Communication "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond" and participation in the EU BEG (2006-08)

Co-chairs: Antonio Domingos Abreu, the Portuguese National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS), and Xavier Cazorla, Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS).

In 2006 the WG Biodiversity welcomed the adoption of the EU Communication "Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond" and its Road Map in May 2006. The WG advocates for the provision of adequate funding for nature conservation, political will at EU level and better public communication. In 2007 the WG continued following-up of the implementation of the EU Communication and its action plan. The WG also participated in the EU BEG and focused on the compilation of case studies to illustrate the economic value of biodiversity. In 2008 the WG followed up the preparation and outcome of the 9th meeting of the Convention of Biological Diversity in Bonn, and the IUCN World Conservation Congress "Shaping a Sustainable Future" in Barcelona.

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference "Biodiversity Conservation and Adaptation to the Impacts of Climate Change" (2005)

Co-chairs: Chair: Sue Collins, English Nature (EN) and Antonio Domingos Abreu, CNADS (PT).

In the preparation for the Annual Conference 2005 the statement Biodiversity Conservation and Adaptation to the Impacts of Climate Change was produced. It emphasizes that Biodiversity loss is being exacerbated by climate change and that this is hindering the EU commitment to achieving the Gothenburg target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The statement argues that: whilst mitigation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are essential, adaptation measures are also required to minimise the risk of loss of plant and animal species. Synergies should also be developed between biodiversity conservation and adaptation and mitigation policies in other key-sectors.

WG Marine and Coastal Zones Policy

Response to the EU Commission consultation process on a Future Maritime Policy (2006-2008)

Chair: Emanuel Gonçalves, CNADS (PT).

The WG Marine responded to the consultation process the European Commission Green Paper on a Future Maritime Policy for the European Union. The response supports the vision of the Green Paper and the need to implement a holistic approach to all maritime activities and the marine environment. It also supports the commitment to 'ecosystem-based management', but highlights that other concepts such as sustainable development or integrated management should inform the development of actions. Regarding climate change mitigation, the EU Maritime policy should include measures addressed to this target. The response also examines the use of governance tools. It states that Marine Spatial Planning can help implementing an ecosystem approach and makes suggestions on where the EU can add value to what is done at the Member State level.

In 2008 the WG assessed how their input was embodied in the "Blue Book" on Integrated Maritime Policy in the European Union.

EEAC Statement and Annual Conference Towards a European Marine Strategy (2004)

Chair: Michael Scott, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH),

In the wake of the publication of the EU Commission Communication "Towards an EU Marine Strategy" in 2002, DG Environment set up the EC Marine Stakeholder Groups. The WG Marine was involved in the groups: and prepared a paper to highlight gaps which still remain in the process underway to draw up the Strategy, and to suggest areas where further work was required.

At the 12th EEAC Annual Conference in Berlin 2004, the WG Marine presented a joint statement as recommendation for the EU Marine Strategy. The EEAC statement is broadly supportive of the Strategy and states that it can make a major contribution to the protection and sustainable management of the Regional Seas around the EU. Nevertheless, the Statement addresses shortcomings in the Strategy process, and serious omissions in the Strategy papers (as drafted). The EEAC statement was also submitted to the Marine Stakeholders Conference in Rotterdam 2004.

WG Statement on the EU Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy (2002)

Chair: Carlos Reis, CNADS (PT).

Following both the EEAC Annual Conference in Sesimbra (Portugal, 2000) and in Gent (Belgium, 2001), the WG Marine analysed the problem of Integrated Coastal Zone Management, basing their reflections on the "Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Recommendation concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe" and on the reports and draft recommendations of the European Parliament's Environmental Committee. The EEAC WG welcomes National strategies for integrated management of the coastal zones. However these measures on national level should be supported by non-conflicting European regulations and structural stimulating measures. The WG therefore suggests that the Commission should review the proposed Recommendation within three years and propose a Community legal framework on ICZM. The WG statement also suggests strategies and priority targets for the first three years which will advance the process of ICZM in Europe.