

**The conclusions of the 6th Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory
Councils, Helsinki, 17-19 September 1998**
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INTEGRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

European Environmental Advisory Councils provide independent advice to regional and national governments on a wide range of issues including societal, scientific, international, sustainable and long-term aspects of environmental policy goals.

At the Sixth Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory Councils (17-19 September 1998 in Tuusula, Finland, organized by the Finnish Council for Environment and Natural Resources) experiences and views regarding "Policy Integration and Implementation" were exchanged and discussed. Also present were representatives from the European Commission DGXI and the European Environment Agency.

Integration and implementation was considered at an EU-wide, national, regional and local level. Sectoral workshops examining agriculture, forestry, tourism and transport allowed for a wide-ranging analysis of the ways in which environmental considerations are integrated into policy areas.

The following conclusions reflect the debate and opinions expressed at this meeting and outline the current and future contribution that European Environmental Advisory Councils can make to the Europe-wide integrative process.

Context

The process currently being driven by Rio+10, the Kyoto protocol and world trade and environment discussions is evolving a global context which, although it carries risks, provides opportunities at all levels for integrating the environment into policies of different sectors.

At a European level, Articles 2 and 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty require the environment to be integrated into all policy of the EU. In order to achieve that there will be a need for increased dialogue between the European Commission, Member States and key sectors. Contributing constructively to that dialogue must be a priority task for European Environmental Advisory Councils.

The developing European Community "Partnership for Integration" Strategy, as presented at the Cardiff Summit, is a vital response to the new Amsterdam Treaty. Articles 2 and 6 of the Strategy secure from Member States a commitment to sustainable development and environmental integration in Community policy and activity. Alongside this, DGXI is carrying out a global assessment of the implementation of the 5th Environmental Action Programme. Advisory Councils can, and should, be involved in contributing to and influencing this process.

Process

Integrating environmental considerations into all policy sectors is a significant challenge facing environmentalists now and into the next century. The process of policy integration is both diverse and complex. The effective integration of environmental concerns into policy making requires that environmental well being and enhancement is a key objective in policy

appraisal, design and implementation, alongside a consideration of the needs of social and economic development. Sustainable development can only be achieved where environmental, social and economic needs are fully integrated. It is essential to achieve both horizontal and vertical integration. Horizontal integration is integration of environmental considerations within sector and across sector. It can also be between different actors requiring effective and efficient coordination between all relevant authorities and agencies of the same policy level (for example, finance and health authorities as well as environmental authorities). Vertical integration in the present context means achieving benefits for the environment through effective and efficient coordination between several different levels of government (local, regional, national, European or global (international conventions)).

There are general principles of integration and subsequent implementation which should be taken into account when developing the Community Integration Strategy.

1. The development of sector-specific integration strategies and action plans including:
 - defining co-operative mechanisms;
 - raising awareness and understanding;
 - developing economic and fiscal initiatives.

The development of appropriate financial incentives and the strengthening of instruments to encourage integration and implementation is important. Appropriate mixes of financial incentives must be designed to reward good environmental practice (and penalize bad practice). Instruments should be strengthened to promote communication, establish clear methods and goals for achieving sustainability and also cross-compliance, for example, requiring compliance with environmental criteria as a precondition for the receipt of grants or subsidies.

2. Examination of institutional decision making arrangements to ensure effective delivery of integration.

3. The establishment of environmental audit systems within sector policy integration and action, identifying (and rewarding) best practice.

4. For each sector the clear definition of indicators and targets which are linked to sustainable development. Medium-term targets should be set as realistic milestones that take us towards achieving integration and environmental sustainability.

It is essential that the process of environmental integration is established at the earliest possible point within the development of policies, plans and programmes. The scope of environmental impact assessment should be extended to include assessing the potential for integration.

Clear assessment methods must be established analyzing progress towards achieving sectoral integration targeted at sustainability. For example, these should include a clear qualitative and quantitative analysis and comparison of environmental advantages and disadvantages of sectoral integration. Other criteria can be the adoption of the polluter-pays principle and assessment of its application and also the design of economic instruments to avoid adverse environmental effects.

In this process it is important to clearly establish the responsibilities of all government departments and ministries; this forms the basis and commitment to design and implement integrated policies. Strong co-operation is necessary between Ministries (Finance, Agriculture, Health, Employment and Environment) and in agriculture between consumers, farmers, environmentalists and Advisory Councils. It is important, however, to avoid an exclusively sectoral approach. A dual approach should be taken; one of integration within sectors and an overarching approach between sectors.

Opportunities for Advisory Councils

The complexity of issues involved presents serious difficulties in achieving complete integration within and between sectors, horizontally and vertically. It is essential that Advisory Councils promote and foster the favourable conditions for integration to succeed.

Combining advocacy at a national and Europe-wide level adds significant weight to the discussion of environmental integration and implementation. Through the provision of expert advice and guidance Advisory Councils have a central role in facilitating this process: the successful integration and implementation of environmental policy in order to move towards a truly sustainable Europe.

These general conclusions, together with detailed conclusions from the agriculture, forestry, tourism and transport workshops, are located on the European Environmental Advisory Council web site at <http://www.eur-focalpt.org/>

The following Councils and organisations participated in the Sixth Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory Councils

Austrian Association for Agricultural Research (O£VAF)

Belgian National Council for Sustainable Development (NRDO-CNDD)

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).

Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Danish Nature Council

English Nature (NCCE)

Environmental and Nature Council of Flanders (MiNa-Raad)

Estonian Ministry of the Environment

European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC)

European Commission DGXI

European Environment Agency (EEA)

Finnish Council for Environment and Natural Resources

Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MMM)

Finnish Ministry of the Environment (YM)

French Agricultural and Environmental Engineering Research Institute (Cemagref)

The German Council of Environmental Advisors (SRU)

Harvard University Committee on the Environment, USA

The Heritage Council of Ireland (SEC)

Hungarian National Council on the Environment (OKT)

Lithuanian Department of Forests and Protected Areas

The Netherlands Advisory Council for Research on Nature and Environment (RMNO)

The Netherlands Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM-raad)

The Netherlands Council for the Rural Area (RLG)

Portuguese National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS)

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP), UK

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)

Spanish Ministry of the Environment

Swedish Environmental Advisory Council (MVB)