# Serving the science, society, policy interface for a better world

An overview of Advisory Councils on the Environment and for Sustainable Development in Europe.

December 2019
The EEAC Network



Living Document Version 1.1

# **The Network**

The European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) is a network of advisory bodies established by national or regional governments and parliaments, to whom EEAC members offer independent advice on strategic questions related to the environment and sustainable development.

**Belgium** Federal Council for Sustainable Development

Catalonia Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia

Flanders Environment and Nature Council of Flanders

France National Council for Ecological Transition

**Germany** German Advisory Council on the Environment

German Advisory Council on Global Change

German Council for Sustainable Development

**Hungary** National Council for Sustainable Development

National Environment Council

Ireland National Economic and Social Council

**Luxembourg** National Council for Sustainable Development

Montenegro National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

**The Netherlands** Council for the Environment and Infrastructure

Portugal National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development

# **Introduction by the Chairman**

Implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires multi-layered decision making, multilevel coordination and cooperation with a multitude of stakeholders. In order to arrange an institutionalised gathering of these various stakeholders, it is broadly recognised that advisory councils on the environment and for sustainable development and similar bodies (hereafter 'advisory councils') play a significant role.

Advisory councils are – mostly – established by national or regional governments or parliaments. These advisory councils offer independent advice to their respective national and regional governments and parliaments relating to the environment and sustainable development. From this overview, it becomes apparent that these advisory councils differ quite significantly. However, several main conclusions can be drawn.

# The roles of advisory councils

Based on their structure and functioning, advisory councils are able to organise broad **stakeholder inclusion**, enhancing better connections between society, science and policymakers<sup>1</sup>. Through the inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders, councils are able to gather different opinions, ideas and interests. Councils are also able to include cross-border thinking, strengthen innovative thoughts, ideas, approaches and proposals, and to counteract the more sectorial or single interest approaches of many individual stakeholders and their lobby groups.

The role of advisory councils in this process of inclusion, as facilitators and agents of stakeholder engagement, is often identified as a core function. In practice, advisory councils have frequently been able **to amplify and widen the role and influence of many parts of civil society.** Through their link to political leadership in sustainability and the expertise combined in the council, they add weight to the political sounding usually provided by civil society organisations.

Advisory councils also have a role to play in *managing the debate about a just transition*. The effects of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will touch upon a broad variety of stakeholders. And if the society, science and policy interface are not well-organised, the group that does not succeed will at least hinder or delay the sustainability transformation. By offering a platform for debate and consensus building, advisory councils could play a pivotal role in managing the debate.

In addition to the role of advisory councils as a platform for inclusion, I would like to underline several other important roles. Sustainable development is a topic that requires a long haul, which means that *safeguarding the long-term vision* is of the utmost importance. However, the nature of the current political debate often seems to privilege short-term subjects over long-term challenges, such as sustainable development. Through their composition, task and position, advisory councils may be considered active safeguards of the long-term focus in policy making, representing the needs of future generations.

Furthermore, councils also advocate an integrated approach towards sustainable development. In practice, this means that attention must be paid to linking different policies and triggering

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019).

cross-cutting arrangements more effectively while ensuring a balanced representation of both socio- economic and environmental aspects. Based on their varied composition, councils provide for inter- disciplinarily and trans-disciplinarily policy advice.

# Compositions of advisory councils

When analysing the diversity of advisory councils in this overview, it's clear that a majority of councils have a *multi-stakeholder composition*. When members of such councils are appointed to represent the views of specific organisations, they often bring the message of the organisations they represent to the Councils' deliberations.

The overview also includes advisory councils that appoint their members on the basis of their personal know-how and position in society. Members can have a background in science, civil society, or the private or public sector. In practice, this means that a council member is able to deliberate freely, but that his or her provenance is in the back of the mind. Such councils have a varied composition.

In addition, a third group of advisory councils can be distinguished on the basis of the background of its members. This third group of council members is appointed solely ad personam. In many cases, such members have a background as independent scientific experts in one or more areas of sustainable development. When a council is composed solely of these type of members, it can be regarded as a kind of scientific expert council.

# What will you find in this overview

To provide interested parties with an overview of different advisory councils on the environment and for sustainable development as established in the European area, the European network of Advisory Councils on the Environment and for Sustainable Development (EEAC Network) drafted this overview study. By means of this study, we hope to shed light on the different compositions, governance structures, tasks, mandates and working methods of advisory councils.

This overview study is a living document, meaning that the study will be regularly updated. The document is based on open source data and is not intended to provide a complete and exhaustive overview of advisory councils. Rather, it should merely serve as a source of general information and inspiration. We sincerely hope that the study is useful in some shape or form.

Arnau Queralt-Bassa

Chairman of the EEAC Network

# Content

1.	National Advisory Councils on the Environment and for Sustainable Development in the	
	European Union: An overview	6
	Austria: Austrian Council for Sustainable Development	7
	Belgium: Federal Council for Sustainable Development/FRDO-CFDD	8
	Bulgaria: National Advisory Council for Sustainable Development/NACSD	10
	Croatia: Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection/SORZO	11
	Czech Republic: The Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republi	c.13
	Denmark: 2030 Panel	14
	Estonia: National Commission for Sustainable Development in Estonia	15
	Finland: National Commission on Sustainable Development in Finland/FNCSD	17
	France: National Council for Ecological Transition /CNTE	19
	Germany: Council for Sustainable Development/RNE	21
	Germany: German Advisory Council on Global Change/WBGU	23
	Germany: German Advisory Council on the Environment/SRU	25
	Hungary: National Council for Sustainable Development/NFFT	27
	Hungary: National Council on the Environment/OKT	29
	Ireland: National Economic and Social Council/NESC	31
	Luxembourg: The High Council for Sustainable Development/CSDD	33
	Malta: The Guardian of Future Generations	34
	The Netherlands: Council for the Environment and Infrastructure/Rli	36
	Portugal: National Council on the Environment and Sustainable Development/CNADS	37
	Slovakia: Council of the Slovak Republic for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development $\dots$	40
	Spain: National Council for Sustainable Development	40
	Spain: Environment Advisory Council of Spain/CAMA	41
	Sweden: Scientific Council for Sustainable Development	43
2.	Sub-national Advisory Councils: Two examples	44
	Catalonia: Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia/CADS	45
	Flanders: Environment and Nature Council of Flanders/Minaraad	46

# 1. National Advisory Councils on the Environment and for Sustainable Development in the European Union: An overview

Given the potential value of advisory councils for the integration and implementation process of sustainable development strategies and policies it is worth taking a closer look at the composition, governance structure, tasks, mandates and working methods of these councils.

This part of the document includes an overview of advisory councils active in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

Although the majority of European Member States have an advisory council, this is not the case for all. To our knowledge, there are no advisory councils established in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Most of these countries, however, do have stakeholder inclusion mechanisms to enhance sustainable development. Either organized civil society or other types of multi-stakeholder institutions operate as a proxy.

In Greece, for example, the Economic and Social Council of Greece (ESC) acts as a national multistakeholder consultation mechanism on sustainable development issues. In Latvia sustainable development issues are discussed among stakeholders through the National Development Council. Besides these institutionalized platforms there are also examples of strong organized civil society initiatives to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, such as *Asvis* in Italy.

# **Austria: Austrian Council for Sustainable Development**

#### Creation

The Council was established in 2018, following a private initiative.

# Composition

The Council for Sustainable Development is an independent advisory body and consists of personalities from business, environment, social affairs, science, young generation, development cooperation, politics and society.

#### **Number of members**

28 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

The council members were appointed for a two-year mandate by the Austrian Center for Sustainability with the support of relevant stakeholders and experts.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

Information to be updated.

#### Secretariat

The members of the Council are assisted by the General Secretariat at the Federal Office as well as by the experts of the Austrian Center for Sustainability and Partner Organizations. The General Secretariat implements the work program. It serves as a business and coordination office for all Council activities. Additional persons with special technical expertise are also available, so-called Principal Advisors. These experts are appointed by the General Secretariat of the Council. A total of 5 people work as technical expert to support the council.

#### General terms of reference

With its impulses, the Council highlights the challenges, fields of action and potential in the field of sustainable development in Austria.

Together with partner organizations, the council supports the implementation of the United Nations Global Sustainability Goals "UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development - SDGs". The Council deals with opportunities, risks and added values of sustainability

#### **Focus**

The focus is on projects that show multi-faceted, cross-divisional and forward-looking change. For the duration of a project, persons with special expertise can also be called in.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Projects: the council initiates national and international projects and campaigns and acts as a driver, multiplier for sustainability initiatives
- 2. Serving as a platform: The Council is an information and knowledge platform as well as communication interface and strong voice for the topic of sustainability. The Austrian Council for Sustainable Development is both an actor and an advisory body.

Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative) Information to be updated.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

Information to be updated.

#### What stands out?

The Austrian Council for Sustainable Development is – as far as we know – the only body that is established through an initiative by private parties. However, in its composition, functioning and the way in which the council presents itself, it has rather strong commonalities with the other advisory bodies as described in this overview.

#### More information:

Austrian Council for Sustainable Development

# Belgium: Federal Council for Sustainable Development/FRDO-CFDD

#### Creation

The FRDO-CFDD was established by law on 5 May 1997, as the successor to the National Council for Sustainable Development (NRDO), which had been operating since 1993. The law was amended in 2010.

# Composition

The members of the Council are representatives of various social groups, namely: environmental organisations, development cooperation organisations, consumer, trade unions and employers' organisations, youth organisations and the scientific community. Representatives of the federal government, the language communities and the regions and environmental and socio-economic councils also sit on the Council but are non-voting members. The royal decree establishing the Council determines which organisations sit on the Council and also determines the allocation of seats.

# **Number of members**

78 members, of whom 37 are voting members.

# Appointment of members

Persons nominated as representatives of the incumbent organisations are appointed members of the FRDO-CFDD by royal decree. Council members are appointed for a term of five years, after which they are eligible for re-election.

# Mechanisms to guarantee the independence of members

The position of Council members is laid down in FRDO-CFDD standing rules, drawn up and laid down as part of the royal decree on which the Council is based (1998).

#### Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own secretariat, which is under the authority of the Bureau (council board). The Bureau recruits the staff of the secretariat. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by the secretariat can also be inferred from the fact that the government can only place government employees at the disposal of the Council with the Council's consent.

# **General terms of reference**

The Council advises the Belgian federal government on federal policy on sustainable development. Particular attention is paid to the implementation of Belgium's international commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Climate Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity. In its work, the Council takes into account the EU policy context when drafting an opinion that relates to the federal level. If desired, the Council also focuses on strictly EU policy dossiers, but always advises the federal government and not the EU institutions.

#### Focus

Although the Council has established a clear focus on sustainable development, this focus has been expanded over the years to include additional specific tasks in the field of product standards, international cooperation, environmental plans and programmes and marine environmental policy.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to federal policy on sustainable development and participating in policy dialogues with members of the government.
- 2. Serving as a forum for the exchange of ideas on sustainable development. This includes the organisation of dialogues with stakeholders in preparation for the drafting of recommendations within the statutory bodies, working groups and forums.
- 3. Providing information and raising awareness about the sustainable development among the public, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of study days, the sustainable development press award and publications.
- 4. Proposing research in all areas relating to sustainable development.

# Type of requests received

The Council receives requests relating to strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus, specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to the government in its recommendations, but the Council and its members do in fact fulfil a broader role. See also: Functions

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government is required by law to seek the Council's opinion on the national strategy for sustainable development. The Council also carries out advisory tasks at the request of ministers or state secretaries, of parliament or on its own initiative. The Council members also achieve independence by exercising the right of initiative.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

The ministers or state secretaries inform the Council – after publication – of the action taken by the government on the recommendations and, where appropriate, its reasons for diverging from them.

#### What stands out?

The FRDO-CFDD is a civil society council with a strikingly large number of members. Only the French Council for Ecological Change has more voting members. A civil society council in which not only the civil society meets but also in which different levels of government meet

(communities, regions) is in keeping with Belgium's federal system. The FRDO-CFDD tries, on a voluntary basis, to position itself as a proactive coordinator between the different parties in civil society, but also between the different levels of government, in order to contribute in a holistic and integrated way to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### More information:

Federal Council for Sustainable Development/FRDO-CFDD

#### Bulgaria: National Advisory Council for Sustainable Development/NACSD

# Creation

By law in 2006, following the publication of the European Union's Sustainable Development Strategy.

# Composition

The Council brings together the Deputy Ministers and Directors-General of the Ministries involved in sustainable development. The Council therefore acts as an interdepartmental consultative body.

#### Number of members

Depends on departmental contribution.

# **Appointment of members**

A person's position within the government and administration determines whether he or she can participate in the Council.

#### Secretariat

The Ministry of Environment and Water supports the Council. The Council does not have an independent secretariat.

#### **General terms of reference**

The Council is tasked with advising the government on current and future sustainable development policies, focusing on ways of contributing to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development in the form of reviews of legislative texts and reporting on the national strategy for sustainable development to international institutions.

#### **Focus**

The Council focuses on sustainable development and in particular establishing a national strategy for sustainable development.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on the formulation of sustainable development policies, focusing particular attention on the national strategy for sustainable development.
- 2. Serving as a platform for consultation between government institutions.

# Type of requests received

The Council mainly fulfils a coordinating role between the policy-making departments concerned. As a result, it only deals with specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council could be said to be guided by the principle of "by the government for the government".

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

No, this is not relevant in light of the Council's terms of reference and composition.

#### What stands out?

The composition of the Bulgarian Council is unique compared to the other councils. Only representatives of the national government participate in the Bulgarian council. Its composition and terms of reference (the only council that deals only with policy and legislative issues) make it very similar to what in many other European countries is called an inter-ministerial consultative body on sustainable development.

#### **Further information**

No designated website available.

# Croatia: Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection/SORZO

#### Creation

By degree in 2008.

#### Composition

The Council is made up of several NGOs and a representative of the United Nations Environmental Programme. The Council has a total of 9 members.

#### **Number of members**

9 members.

# **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed for an indefinite term of office.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

Independence is guaranteed by the method of appointment and the associated term of office (indefinite) and the fact that Council members represent their own organisation. This is laid down in the legislation establishing the Council.

#### Secretariat

The Council has administrative support but no independently designated secretariat. Coordination is carried out by the Ministry of the Environment, Regional Planning and Construction.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council operates on the basis of a "supervisory mode" in which it does not act on its own initiative. The government will seek the Council's advice, but is not obliged to do so.

#### The Council's general terms of reference

The Council makes recommendations and carries out assessments on the basis of existing or forthcoming government policy on sustainable development and environmental protection. In doing so, the Council strives to provide a unanimous opinion. The Council may set up subject-specific working groups from which it may draw on external expertise and experts. Since Croatia's accession to the European Union, the EU policy context has become (even) more important to the Council.

#### **Focus**

The Council focuses on harmonising economic development within the framework of environmental protection and sustainable development.

#### Mission

Creating harmonised economic development within the framework of environmental protection and sustainable development. It also serves to maintain and ensure the continuity of the scientific basis of legislation relating to the environment and/or sustainable development.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to national sustainable development policies.
- 2. Serving as a platform for an exchange of ideas on strategic issues relating to sustainable development and environmental protection.

# Type of requests received

The Council deals with strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus, specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally advises the national government.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

Under the Nature Conservation Act, the government is required to have all legislation on nature protection first reviewed by the Council before a legislative proposal can be submitted to parliament. It is not evident from written sources whether the Council has a legal mandate to amend and/or reject draft legislation.

#### What stands out?

The distinguishing feature of the Croatian Council is the "supervisory mode" in which it does not take action on its own initiative, only at the request of the government. The Council is not particularly active at present and is clearly a reactive platform that can be used at the government's request to review and advise on environmental issues and sustainable development.

# More information

Council for Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection

# Czech Republic: The Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic

#### Creation

By law in 2003, revised in 2014

#### Composition

The Council is made up of representatives of government (national and local) and the major groups represented in society (e.g. NGOs, academia) and is chaired by the prime minister.

# **Appointment of members**

The legislation establishing the Council determines which organisations sit on the Council as well as the allocation of seats. Persons nominated as representatives of the incumbent organisations are appointed Council members by ministerial decree.

#### **Number of members**

40 members.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The position of Council members is laid down in the Council's constitution and their independence is guaranteed as a result of the procedure whereby the government appoints representatives – who have been put forward by its own organisation – for a fixed term.

#### Secretariat

The secretariat is provided by officials of the Ministry of the Environment.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council carries out advisory tasks at the request of ministers or state secretaries, of parliament or on its own initiative.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council has been appointed to advise the government on policy-making on the subject of sustainable development, with a specific focus on drafting the national strategy for sustainable development. In addition, facilitating deliberation between stakeholders is one of the Council's core tasks. To this end, expert meetings, internet consultations and the annual Sustainable Development Forum are organised to support broad public participation and the optimal provision of information on sustainable development.

#### Mission

The Council serves as a platform and institution that approaches the subject of sustainable development in a systemic manner taking the long-term view.

#### Focus

The Council focuses on the sustainability transition in the Czech Republic.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to sustainable development policies.
- 2. Serving as a forum for the exchange of ideas on sustainable development.
- 3. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies.

# Type of requests received

The Council provides advice on strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council reports to the government, but because of the type of activities it undertakes, the Council focuses on society in general.

#### Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

#### What stands out?

The Czech Council has a striking number of similarities to the French Council, CNTE, and the Finnish Commission. They are all civil society councils with a large number of members, many of whom have similar backgrounds (chaired by either the prime minister or the minister of the environment), and are embedded in government. They have similar tasks and are all supported by ministerial secretariats.

#### More information

The Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic

#### Denmark: 2030 Panel

# Creation

The Panel was established in 2017, following an initiative by the All-Party Group on the SDGs in the Danish national assembly ("the 2030-Network").

#### Composition

The panel consists of 22 people, designated by the 2030-Network as representatives of major players in Danish society or by virtue of their personal capacity and knowledge of the implementation and fulfilment of the UN's world goals nationally and globally.

# **Number of members**

22 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

The members of the 2030-Panel are appointed by the members of the 2030-Network.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The 2030-Panel is independent in itself with respect to its relationship with the 2030-Network. It advises the network, but it is up to the members of the panel themselves to choose the subjects they think need to be highlighted and advised on.

# Secretariat

The secretariat function is handled by the NGO-platform Global Focus. One staff member assists in facilitating meetings and events, coordinating visits, contacting other actors, knowledge sharing etc.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The 2030 panel can implement independent initiatives and is not subject to political instruction from the network.

#### **Focus**

The purpose of the 2030 panel is to support the 2030 network's political work.

#### **Function**

 Through analysis work, sparring, knowledge sharing and meetings with the network on independent topics, the Panel supports the 2030 network's political work. A recent example of such work includes the launch of the first of 17 baselines for monitoring the achievement of the goals in Denmark in January 2019. The baseline was on SDG 11 and was received by the Parliamentarians from the 2030-Network.

# What sector(s) of society does the Council advise?

The panel addresses the members of the 2030-Network; however their work also addresses society as a whole as well as specific stakeholders. An example is the "baseline-project on SDG 11" – an initiative to be used by Danish members of parliament but also to inform and be used within Danish society.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

Positive response on the baseline project from members of the 2030-Network.

#### What stands out?

The Panel was established following an initiative by the All-Party Group on the SDGs in the Danish national assembly. Being established by a non-formalized all-party group, and not being embedded in Danish law, makes the Panel a unique body in this overview.

#### More information

2030 Panel

# Estonia: National Commission for Sustainable Development in Estonia

# Creation

By law in 1996, revised in 2009.

# Composition

Before 2009, the Commission consisted of a variety of participants, including the government, parliament, government agencies, the scientific community, industry and NGOs. Since 2009, the Commission has consisted solely of representatives of civil society.

# **Number of members**

28 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

The Estonian government determines which organisations will have a seat on the Commission and then appoints the members who have been nominated by the Estonian government's own organisation.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The Commission members represent their own organisation on the Commission. In addition, the law establishing the Commission identifies the Commission as an independent advisory body and, above all, as a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders. It is difficult to determine the effect of the Commission being supported by an official organisation that is an integral part of the chancellery.

#### Secretariat

The strategy unit of the State Chancellery acts as the Commission's secretariat and therefore also provides a link to the government and the Europe 2020 strategy.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government is not obliged to seek advice, but it is customary for the Commission to be involved in drawing up the national strategy for sustainable development. The Commission also has the freedom to address issues requiring advice as well as to submit literal legislative proposals to the government.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Commission focuses on giving advice on issues relating to sustainable development. Recently, the Commission has been focusing in particular on issues relating to human resources and energy efficiency. The EU component is incorporated into the work through the integration of EU issues that affect national policies on the environment and sustainability.

## Mission

The mission is to advise the government on issues relating to sustainable development, focusing particularly on the development of a national strategy for sustainable development. In addition, the Commission was set up to bring together various sectoral interests and to present these parties' views on sustainable development to the government.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Providing advice to the government on sustainable development.
- 2. Organising dialogues in order to bring together potential and actual stakeholders and provide advice to the government.
- 3. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among the public, private individuals and public bodies.

#### Type of requests received

The Commission focuses on strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Commission formally reports to the national and local authorities but addresses a wider audience of relevant stakeholders in its advice.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the federal government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any recommendation.

# What stands out?

Since 2009, the Commission, like the Belgian FRDO-CFDD, has been a civil society council in which no government representatives (with voting rights) participate. This distinguishes the Estonian Commission from its fellow civil society councils included in this study. On the other hand, the Commission does not have an independent secretariat. The secretariat is administered by the State Chancellery's strategy unit. How this relationship works in practice has not been investigated in this study.

#### More information:

National Commission for Sustainable Development in Estonia

# Finland: National Commission on Sustainable Development in Finland/FNCSD

#### Creation

By law in 1993.

#### Composition

The Commission is made up of the Finnish prime minister, eight ministers from different departments, civil servants, representatives from employers and industry, local authorities, church groups, trade unions, NGOs and the scientific community.

# **Number of members**

44 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

Members are appointed in three stages. Under the Commission's legal framework, the organisations participating in the Council are known and the allocation of seats has been determined. The selected organisations then nominate their representatives. The nominated representatives are then appointed by the government as Council members.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The independence of Council members is guaranteed in their nomination by their own organisation, the ability of Council members to determine part of the Council's agenda themselves and the function of the Council as a facilitator for dialogue and consensus building.

#### Secretariat

The secretariat is run by officials from different ministries.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

It is good practice for the Commission to be involved in sustainable development issues, with a particular focus on developing the national strategy for sustainable development. However, there is no legal requirement to do so.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The FNCSD was established to assist in the preparation and implementation of Finland's national strategy for sustainable development and to facilitate open and constructive multistakeholder dialogue.

#### Mission

The Commission is a platform for open and constructive dialogue in support of the sustainability strategy and in implementation of the national strategy for sustainable development.

#### **Focus**

Supporting a transition to sustainable development, with a specific focus on the drafting of the national strategy for sustainable development.

#### **Function**

1. Organising dialogues to bring together (possibly) conflicting interests and stakeholders and facilitating a dialogue between government and non-governmental parties at the highest level. The Commission is chaired by the Finnish prime minister. However, the Council was not set up to serve as a "negotiating platform". Its main aim is to provide an open and constructive dialogue between parties.

#### Type of requests received

The Commission is invited to respond to the national strategy for sustainable development, covering both strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Commission formally reports to the government, but it would be a misunderstanding to regard this as one-way traffic. It is more of a dialogue between parties, including between government and non-governmental parties.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

Due to the composition and role of the Council, this question does not arise.

#### What stands out?

In terms of its composition, the Commission is not exceptional, but what is striking is that the Commission only fulfils the role of facilitating dialogue, and not so much the position of advisor. This distinguishes the Commission from peer organisations in Belgium, for example, and to a certain extent in France as well. It is also the only commission to receive scientific advice from an expert platform set up specifically for this purpose: the Finnish Expert Panel on Sustainable Development (FEBSD). The Finnish Commission, together with the Irish and Czech councils and others, is also unique in the fact that the head of government participates in the council. The Commission also brings most government ministers around the table.

# More information:

National Commission on Sustainable Development in Finland

# France: National Council for Ecological Transition /CNTE

#### Creation

In 2012, resulting from a merger of two previous advisory councils and enshrined in national legislation.

# Composition

The Council brings together six political groups, which together account for fifty of its members. These fifty members are made up of representatives of civil society (including trade unions (8 members), employers (8 members), environmental organisations (8 members), other NGOs (9 members) and government representatives (European parliament, national and regional government, environmental agencies) (25 members)). Apart from the regional, national and parliamentary government representatives, the other government representatives who sit on the Council are not voting members.

#### **Number of members**

58 members (of whom 50 are voting members).

#### **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed for a term of three years and are eligible for re-election. Members are appointed in three stages. The organisations participating in the Council are appointed and the allocation of seats determined in accordance with the statutory decree. The selected organisations then nominate their representatives. These members are then appointed as the official representatives of the organisations in question by a ministerial decree.

#### Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The independence of Council members is guaranteed in their nomination by their own organisation, the ability of Council members to determine part of the Council's agenda themselves and to invite external experts to take part in an advisory process.

#### Secretariat

The Council is supported by a Cabinet that is part of the Ministry of the Environment, and which is also the Cabinet of the National Commissioner for Sustainable Development.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council is intended to be a platform that facilitates dialogue on ecological transition/sustainability transition. The Council's recommendations are addressed to national government, in which the EU policy context plays an important part and is taken into account in the debates and dialogues. Two representatives from the European parliament (from France) also sit on the Council. This is unique compared to other councils. Council members may, if they so wish, place an EU policy issue on the agenda.

# Mission

The Council advises its government in support of the national strategy in the areas of the environment, energy, biodiversity, sustainable development and CSR. The Council has also been appointed to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of policy on ecology and sustainable development. Finally, the Council serves as a platform for the national dialogue on the environment/ecology and sustainable development.

#### **Focus**

The ecological transition, sustainable development, biodiversity and environmental and social issues.

#### **Functions**

- Advising the government on all measures relating to national policies on sustainable development, the environment, biodiversity, energy and CSR. Until now, this has rarely taken the form of reports, as is often the case with other advisory councils. The Council issues the advice by means of a direct dialogue with government representatives and by formulating statements and/or responses to proposed legislation and regulations. This situation is similar to the situation in Finland, for example.
- 2. Serving as a forum with the aim of bringing together (potentially) conflicting interests and both public and private stakeholders.

# Type of requests received

The Council is asked to respond to the national strategy for ecological transition. This covers strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus. The Council also has the freedom, on its own initiative or at the request of the government, to include on the agenda strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus. However, the topics always relate to ecological transition, sustainable development, biodiversity and environmental and social issues. The council also responds to requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council officially advises the national government and parliament. However, the advice often also has relevance for a wider audience. Officially, the Council also provides its fellow advisory council (socio-economic council), as well as the regional counterparts of the socio-economic council, with information on the content of the Council's products.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

When drawing up the national agenda for the ecological transition (similar to the national sustainable development strategy), the French government is required to request the Council's cooperation. The Council is also at liberty to place an advisory item on the agenda or to respond to a request from the government.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

In the case of the National Council for Ecological Transition in France, the question of whether the government and parliament should respond is different. The Council and the ministry work together (co-creation) to draw up the national agenda for ecological transition (similar to the national sustainable development strategy). The results of this cooperation are evaluated every two years by the ministry. The government's feedback on other topics is less formalised. In this case, the minister will often decide to provide an update of the current policy and the policy to be developed, in which the Council's contribution is also discussed.

# What stands out

The French Council is based on the "Grenelle model", a typically French model of governance in which every stakeholder is given a place at the table to discuss complex issues. On this basis, it could be said that it is a consultative body rather than an advisory one. However, this

would not be entirely justified because the deliberative nature of the Council and the reviews drawn up on proposed legislation and regulations are certainly of an advisory nature.

Furthermore, it is unique that the French Council also has Members of the European Parliament among its members. These members, as well as their regional and national colleagues, are entitled to vote in the Council. It is also interesting to see that Focus/scope is somewhere between a council for environmental issues and sustainable development and a socio-economic council. What distinguishes the CNTE from, for example, the Irish Economic and Social Council is that the environment, ecology and sustainable development are the top priority, whereas for the Irish (and to some extent the Greeks as well) sustainable development is part of the "greater socio-economic task".

#### More information

**National Council for Ecological Transition** 

#### **Germany: Council for Sustainable Development/RNE**

#### Creation

Appointed by the then Chancellor Schröder in 2001.

#### Composition

The Council is made up of people drawn from "public life". Members are appointed on the basis of their background and expertise. Members do not represent a particular interest or organisation. In other words, there is in fact a council of experts, whether or not with a purely scientific background.

# **Number of members**

15 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

Members of the Council are appointed by the Federal Chancellor for a term of four years. Members of the Council may be reappointed after serving a term of office.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

Because Council members are appointed "ad personam/in their own right" for a fixed term of four years, their freedom of insight, action and advice is guaranteed.

# Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own independent secretariat. However, the secretariat is, for administrative purposes, part of the German semi-governmental organisation Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council advises the federal government on sustainable development policy. The Council also seeks to further strengthen Germany's federal sustainability strategy by drafting recommendations on objectives and indicators. It was also set up to facilitate dialogue on sustainable development.

#### Mission

The RNE contributes to the development and updating of sustainable development strategy. The Council also makes (political) recommendations to ensure the implementation of sustainable development. It also highlights specific areas of interest, actions and projects and helps to strengthen communication on sustainable development in Germany.

#### **Focus**

The Council advises on existing and draft policies relating to sustainable development. Germany's national strategy for sustainable development also falls within the Council's mandate. However, the Council is free to address other related policy issues from its focus on sustainable development. The council regularly makes use of this freedom to give advice on matters such as green finance and governance. If necessary, the Council will also consider EU issues in its advice. In doing so, however, the Council is addressing only the federal government in Germany.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on the formulation of sustainable development policies, focusing particular attention on the national strategy for sustainable development.
- 2. Organising dialogues in order to bring together (potentially) conflicting interests and stakeholders.
- 3. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of workshops, publications and large-scale events.

#### Type of requests received

The Council is invited to respond to the national strategy for sustainable development, covering both strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus. The Council is also free to address strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus as it sees fit, or as requested. However, the issues are always linked to the subject of sustainable development.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally addresses its recommendations to the federal government. However, recommendations arising from advice, projects, etc. can also be addressed to other stakeholders. An example of this is the "sustainable shopping basket" initiative in which the Council addresses German consumers directly. The introduction of the "Sustainability Code", which addressed the business community, is also a well-known example of the broader scope of the Council.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council also carries out advisory tasks at the request of the government or parliament or on its own initiative.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the federal government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any recommendation.

# What stands out?

The German Council for Sustainable Development has members who have been appointed on the basis of their own stature, background and social merits and is known for its pioneering role in providing information and raising awareness in the performance of its tasks. The Council plays an important part in the social dialogue on sustainable development and therefore has a high degree of freedom and capacity to launch relevant projects.

#### More information

Council for Sustainable Development

# **Germany: German Advisory Council on Global Change/WBGU**

# Creation

The WBGU was established in 1992 in response to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. On 8 April1992 the Council was created by Joint Decree of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, as renewed on 25 October 2000. The Council advises the German Federal Government and is seconded by an interministerial committee, representing all federal ministries and the Federal Chancellery.

# Composition

The Council consists exclusively of scientists with special knowledge and experience regarding the WBGU's task. Their disciplinary background is diverse, e.g. ranging from natural sciences to social sciences, economics, engineering and psychology.

# **Number of members**

Nine members.

#### **Appointment of members**

The nine members of the WBGU are appointed by the German government's Federal Cabinet for a term of four years and can be reappointed. The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) finance the Council and share the lead management. See below.

# Mechanisms to guarantee the independence of members

The WBGU's sole duty is to fulfil its task and is otherwise independent in terms of its work and choice of topics for its flagship reports.

# Secretariat

The Secretariat is the organizational hub of the WBGU. It contributes its scientific expertise, coordinates processes, organizes logistical workflows, and curates events. In consultation with the Council, it develops cooperation and communication formats and is the contact interface for ministries, the press and the public. The Secretariat has ten staff members, including seven scientists. In addition, council members are supported by a part-time personal research assistant during their membership.

# **General terms of reference**

Humans are interfering significantly in the way the Earth's ecosystems function. This is happening on a global scale, which is why the present period is being referred to as the

Anthropocene. The future of our societies depends to a large extent on whether human development and our prosperity models can be redesigned so as to ensure that Earth system services are safeguarded and planetary guard rails are not breached, thereby sustaining humanity's natural life-support systems. A fundamental departure from previous development pathways is needed in order to achieve these goals – the WBGU speaks of a global transformation towards sustainability. The WBGU's work focuses on how this transformation can succeed and which measures are relevant in achieving it.

#### Mission - "Science for a sustainable future."

The WBGU compiles scientific assessments, develops plans and proposes solutions for global sustainability. Our thinking is systemic, our work is independent and interdisciplinary. In dialogue with policymakers, society and international organizations, we seek to uncover ways of achieving the Great Transformation.

#### **Focus**

The WBGU systemically assesses the pathways and prospects for enacting a global transformation towards sustainability and blockages preventing it. In identifying leverages for action, the WBGU focuses predominantly on Germany as an actor in global governance.

#### **Functions**

The WBGU's remit is to publish reports that

- analyse global environmental and development problems,
- evaluate research on globally sustainable development, identify gaps in research, and generate stimuli for science,
- identify new problem areas such as an early warning system,
- appraise global sustainability policy,
- make recommendations for action and research.

#### Type of requests received

During each four-year term of appointment, the WBGU generally publishes up to two flagship reports as well as some smaller products such as special reports, policy papers and fact sheets. All products are published in German and English. All WBGU publications are formally submitted to the Federal Government and are presented at press conferences. In addition, the WBGU's recommendations are presented at Parliamentary evenings, in Bundestag committees, at (scientific) conferences and at United Nations events. The WBGU aims to raise awareness of the challenges of globally sustainable development through its press and public relations activities.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to political decision-makers as well as the general public.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request/own initiative)

The WBGU is independent in terms of its work, its scientific policy advice and in the choice of topics for its flagship reports. In dialogue with academia, policymakers and ministerial management, civil society and the general public, the Council identifies hot topics and respective windows of opportunity to stimulate debate, research and action.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

The WBGU's reports are submitted to the German Federal Government, primarily to the Minister of Education and Research and the Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, who are not required to issue a formal response. However, the reports are often presented and discussed with the ministers during press conferences; recommendations are commonly used and taken up by the ministries and the Federal Government.

#### What stands out?

The WBGU's scope is global, its approach interdisciplinary. Its members share a scientific background and expertise. The Council is independent in fulfilling its mandate. The WBGU enjoys visibility and appreciation at international level. Its visionary and systemic perspective is an asset. The WBGU has inspired and sparked debate, research and political action, e.g. with regard to planetary guard rails, temperature targets, decarbonization and sustainability transformation.

# More information:

German Advisory Council on Global Change

#### **Germany: German Advisory Council on the Environment/SRU**

#### Creation

By law in 1972.

# Composition

The SRU's members comprise seven university professors with different backgrounds, each of whom has specific knowledge and expertise in matters of environmental protection. Council members are drawn from the scientific community and must not be (recently) associated with a special interest group.

#### **Number of members**

7 members.

# **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed by the Cabinet of the Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection, Built Environment and Nuclear Safety. Council members are appointed for a term of four years.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The Council and its members operate independently. The Council is a separate entity. This situation is guaranteed by a ministerial decree. This decree is enshrined in the law establishing the Council (1971). The decree was last revised in 2005.

# Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own secretariat. However, the secretariat is, for administrative purposes, part of the German governmental organisation Umweltbundesamt (Federal Environment Office). This party has far-reaching powers that can have a major impact on the

secretariat. When taking important measures – which could affect the secretariat – the chair of the Council must be consulted.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The council is an expert advisory body tasked with examining and describing environmental conditions, problems and relevant political trends. It is also tasked with proposing solutions and preventive measures in relation to environmental issues. Not only is the EU policy dimension included in the federal context, the Council also focuses on specific EU policy themes and – in exceptional cases – sometimes even reports to the EU institutions directly.

#### Mission

The German Advisory Council on the Environment has been appointed to study and describe the environmental conditions, environmental problems and relevant political trends. The Council is also tasked with presenting solutions and preventive measures relating to environmental issues.

#### **Focus**

The SRU focuses on environmental issues across the board.

#### **Functions**

- Making recommendations to the government that describe and analyse the condition of the environment, any associated problems and political trends. In addition, the council is supposed to come up with solutions and preventive measures in the recommendations in order to protect the environment.
- 2. Publishing studies: As set out in the Council's terms of reference, the SRU prepares an environmental report every four years and presents it to the federal government. The report describes relevant developments in environmental policy and provides a thorough analysis of the selected topics.

# Type of requests received

The Council publishes reports and studies that often address strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus. The Council rarely makes recommendations on specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and does not receive requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to the federal government in Germany. Nevertheless, other parties are also addressed as part of the Council's advisory role. The main party within this is "the public". This description of the recipients of the Council's recommendations provides opportunities. The SRU's recommendations are therefore more often addressed to EU institutions.

#### Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council functions almost like a think tank: the government does not formally seek the Council's advice. On the other hand, the Council is free to address any issue in a wide range of environmental issues.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the federal government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any recommendation.

#### What stands out?

The Council is unique because it functions almost as a think tank. For example, the SRU is the only council – which is included in this study – that does not receive requests for advice from a party seeking advice but places all of the advice topics on its own agenda. The Council is also unique in its own country, although all the other councils tasked with advising the federal government do have the opportunity to place items on their own agenda.

The Council is a typical expert advisory council. Like its fellow expert councils in Finland and Sweden, the SRU has only scientific experts as Council members. It is striking that the Council has a very strict policy on the independence of its members. Where, for example in the Netherlands, a code of conduct has been drawn up to prevent conflicts of interest, the SRU regards the criteria for independence of Council members as guaranteed by law.

The Council has the opportunity to draw on a wide range of issues relating to environmental themes. According to those involved, this is also a challenge. The Council's interdisciplinary nature and the complexity and multiplicity of the subjects it tackles sometimes make it difficult to set priorities.

#### More information

German Advisory Council on the Environment

# **Hungary: National Council for Sustainable Development/NFFT**

#### Creation

By law in 2010.

#### Composition

The Council is made up of fourteen different parties, including trade unions, the Hungarian science academy, NGOs, representatives of churches and parliamentarians.

#### **Number of members**

26 members.

# **Appointment of members**

In a similar way to the situation in Belgium (federal level), the government (in this case parliament) appoints the various institutions by decree. These institutions have either one, two or three seats on the Council. Organisations will then nominate persons to represent the organisation on the Council. There is no maximum term for the appointment of Council members.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The method by which board members are appointed ensures their independence. Various organisations are entitled to one, two or three seats on the Council by parliamentary decree. These organisations are free to choose who represents them on the Council. The government has no means of influencing the term of office.

**Secretariat**: The Council is supported by its own secretariat. The secretariat is administered by the support agency of the Hungarian parliament.

#### The Council's general terms of reference

The Council's task is to inform the MPs in the Hungarian national parliament about the impact of proposals (policies, strategies, legislation, programmes) on sustainable development. It is also tasked with keeping "the public" informed and drawing up the national strategy for sustainable development. The Council's legal status – as laid down in the 2010 parliamentary decree – also provides scope for addressing any issue relating to sustainable development, without restrictions. As a result, the Council can also focus on European or even global issues and advise on them, either to the parliament or "the public".

#### Vision

The NFFT's vision is: "to rise above individual, short-term interests, to focus on basic values arising from human dignity and community, longer-term interests extending over several generations; to think based on a systems approach, according to which the problems in our lives are entwined, and that is exactly why they cannot be solved by today's methods, in a segregated system of institutions, because the individual is also part of the global system; and to establish a national consensus regarding the need to adjust our consumption needs to what the environment can provide because society may only take as much from its environment as natural processes are able to compensate for."

#### **Focus**

Supporting the sustainable development transition.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the parliament on all measures concerning national sustainable development policies.
- 2. Serving as a platform for the exchange of views on sustainable development in order to bring together (potentially) conflicting interests and stakeholders and to facilitate a dialogue between government and non-governmental parties at the highest level.
- Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of workshops and publications.

# Type of requests received

The Council is invited to respond to the national strategy for sustainable development, covering both strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus. The Council is also free to include strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus on the agenda as it sees fit, or as requested. However, the issues are always linked to the subject of sustainable development.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The recommendations are formally addressed to members of parliament, which is a distinctive feature, as most councils either address only the government or the government and parliament. Regardless of the fact that the government is the official party to be addressed, the Council also has the statutory duty to address the whole of society, consisting of families and households, businesses, churches and civil society.

Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council is tasked with drawing up the national strategy for sustainable development. In certain cases, the government is required to ask the Council for input on this policy area. The rights of the Council – as laid down in the 2010 parliamentary decree – also provide scope for addressing any issue relating to sustainable development, without restrictions.

#### Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the federal government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any recommendation.

#### What stands out?

The Hungarian Council is unique in that it is the only one of the councils studied that is housed in the national parliament. Another noteworthy feature is the appointment of council members to an unlimited term of office. This is important from the point of view of the independence of Council members. On the other hand, there are practical questions to be raised in respect of unlimited appointments. In addition, the Hungarian Council is one of the few civil society councils that also has ecclesiastical organisations among its members. In Hungary, as in Germany, the Advisory Council on Sustainable Development is separate from the Advisory Council on the Environment.

#### More information

National Council for Sustainable Development

# **Hungary: National Council on the Environment/OKT**

# Creation

In 1995 through national legislation.

#### Composition

The Council has one member from the government, namely the State Secretary for Environmental Affairs. The other members are nominated from three umbrella organisations/coalitions: The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the (industrial) employers' organisation and green NGOs. These three parties all have the same number of seats on the Council (seven each).

# **Number of members**

22 members.

# **Appointment of members**

Hungarian law lays down which institutions sit on the Council and how many seats are allotted to each organisation. These organisations then nominate persons to represent the organisation on the Council. Council members are appointed for a term of five years, but can be "reappointed" sooner from within their own organisation.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The method of appointment (from within the own organisation), the fact that Council members' activities are unpaid and the stature and membership of the Council members guarantee the independence of the Council and its members.

**Secretariat**: The Council is supported by its own independent secretariat. The secretariat is an administrative part of the Ministry of the Environment and Agriculture.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government is required to seek the Council's opinion on a number of environmental issues (in the case of a legislative proposal and environmental impact assessments). The Council is also authorised to include items on its own agenda.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council is tasked with reviewing proposed legislation and regulations relating to the environment. It also issues statements on environmental impact assessments as well as environmental plans and programmes. The Council is also responsible for advising the authorities on improving the institutional system for nature protection and environmental matters. Specific attention is focused on scientific research, education and the provision of information. The EU context plays an important role, particularly in relation to the council's task of issuing statements on environmental impact assessments, plans and programmes. These often stem directly from the EU Directive on Environmental Impact Assessments. The Council does not address the EU institutions, but translates the issues into the national context.

#### Focus

The Council focuses on environmental issues in the widest sense of the word.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on ways of improving the institutional system for nature protection and environmental issues.
- 2. Serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas on environmental issues. This includes the organisation of dialogues with stakeholders to prepare for the Council's work.

# Type of requests received

The Council receives requests relating to strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus, specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council reports to the government. On the other hand, the Council's message has been expanded.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

Although the government does have to request the Council's input on a number of issues, there is no obligation on it to respond after publication of the Council's product.

#### What stands out?

The Hungarian Council on the Environment, like the Mina Council, is a civil society council that is not chaired by a representative of the government (which is seeking advice). What is striking is that the Council – as the country's only civil society council – has an equal allocation of seats among the various coalitions that sit on it, and a rotating chairmanship, as there is in the case of the Mina Council. The Council is also one of the few councils – included in the study – to be

consulted by the government when legislative proposals are made on specific environmental issues.

#### **Further information**

No designated website available.

#### **Ireland: National Economic and Social Council/NESC**

#### Creation

In 1973; the Irish Council for Sustainable Development merged with the National Social Economic Council in 2012.

#### Composition

The Council is made up of government representatives, trade unions, agricultural organisations, civil society organisations and environmental groups as well as members of the government and independent experts.

#### **Number of members**

29 members (variable number depending on number of independent experts).

#### **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed by the prime minister's office for a term of three years. Members representing civil society or specific interests (industry, agriculture) are nominated by their own organisation and then appointed, while government representatives and experts are directly selected by the prime minister's office. Similar to the situation in the Netherlands, anyone can apply for a role as an expert member of the Council. A selection is then made on the basis of experience and skills.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The way in which Council members – who are not part of the government – are appointed (nomination and application) guarantees their independence. Although the prime minister is legally empowered to dismiss a member (in the event of illness or death, misconduct or obstructing the functioning of the Council), this instrument has never been used.

# Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own independent secretariat. However, this secretariat is not an autonomous body, but an administrative part of the prime minister's office.

#### The Council's general terms of reference

The revised law (2006) on which the Council is based states that the Council's task is to analyse and report on strategic policy developments in the field of A) sustainable economic, social and environmental issues in Ireland, B) achieving social justice and C) developing and establishing a strategic framework within which the government and social partners can meet and negotiations can be held between these parties. Furthermore, the Council's legal framework explicitly refers to EU affairs, combined with its wide-ranging remit, ensures that the EU policy dimension becomes part of its focus as a matter of course. However, the wide range of tasks does not mean that the Council is reporting to the EU institutions in its advice. EU policies are incorporated into the recommendations addressed to national and regional government.

#### **Focus**

The Council focuses on the wide range of sustainable economic, social and environmental issues, including at a strategic level.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to national policy on sustainable development and participating in policy dialogues with members of the government.
- 2. Serving as a forum for the exchange of views on sustainable development in order to bring together (potentially) conflicting interests and stakeholders and to facilitate a dialogue between government and non-governmental parties at the highest level.
- Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among the public, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of workshops and publications.

# Type of requests received

The Council does not receive requests to review proposed laws, but rather strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

Although the Council formally reports to the prime minister (and the government), it also makes recommendations that have an impact on or relate to other actors, not least to the members of the civil society organisations that are represented in the Council.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government is under no statutory obligation to seek the Council's advice. However, the prime minister may decide to seek the Council's advice. The Council, for its part, is at liberty under the law to include any topic in the policy area in which it advises, without being asked to do so.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

The government receives the recommendations and takes them into consideration, but is still not required by law or bound by tradition to give a (formal) response.

# What stands out?

The Irish Council on Sustainable Development was merged with the Economic and Social Council in 2012. Although council mergers are not exceptional (the Netherlands, Great Britain, Flanders), the Economic and Social Council in Ireland does have the "widest-ranging" portfolio since the merger. When looking at the recommendations, it seems that a balance has been struck in the issues considered to date. Social housing, nature conservation, wind energy and the banking sector are themes that encompass the various pillars of sustainable development.

The Irish Council, like the Finnish Council, is the only council among those studied on which the head of government has a seat or is represented. In terms of composition, the Irish Council does not differ much from other councils with civil society members, but is most similar to the CNTE in France.

# More information

National Economic and Social Council

#### **Luxembourg: The High Council for Sustainable Development/CSDD**

#### Creation

By law in 2004, with several subsequent revisions.

# Composition

The Council is made up of a diverse cross-section of actors from across Luxembourg society. Members are appointed on a personal basis, taking into account their diversity of knowledge, skills and background.

## **Number of members**

15 members.

# **Appointment of members**

Council members are nominated by the government. The chair is appointed by the Grand Duke himself. This appointment is enshrined in the law establishing the Council.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The method of appointment, on a personal basis, guarantees the independence of the Council members and the Council. In addition, the Grand Ducal Regulation of 2005 authorises the Council to issue both solicited and unsolicited advice.

#### Secretariat

The secretariat consists of an official from the national Ministry of the Environment, who is available on a part-time basis to work as secretary to the Council.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government can ask for advice, but the Council is also free to put an advisory subject on the agenda itself and to address it. The government is under no obligation to seek the Council's opinion in any particular case.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council serves as a forum for reflection and discussion on sustainable development in Luxembourg.

#### Mission

The Council is tasked with conducting research and studies on all issues relating to sustainable development and with maintaining links with similar bodies within the European Union. At the same time, the Council will endeavour to achieve the broad participation of public and private organisations, as well as the public in support of the sustainable development transition. Finally, the Council has been asked to advise on all measures prepared by the government (including the national strategy for sustainable development) in the area of sustainability.

# **Focus**

Supporting the sustainable development transition, which also includes policy issues relating to sustainable development, such as the circular economy. The European policy context is a

major factor and is taken into account in the work of the Council. However, the Council does not address purely the European policy context or the European institutions.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to national sustainable development policies.
- 2. Serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas on sustainable development. This includes the organisation of stakeholder dialogues to prepare for the Council's advice.
- 3. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of workshops and publications.

# Type of requests received

The Council mainly provides advice and reflections on strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus which relate to sustainable development in its widest sense.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council primarily reports to the government, but it is also tasked with ensuring the broad participation of public and private organisations, as well as the public, in order to support the sustainable development transition.

# Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

# What stands out?

Like those of the Dutch Council, the High Council's members are appointed on the basis of their own stature, background and social merits. This is where the similarity with the Dutch Council ends, given that the Luxembourgers – like the Germans and Finns, among others – have a council that focuses solely on sustainable development. What is also striking is that the Council operates with very little secretarial support and a budget to match.

# More information

The High Council for Sustainable Development

#### **Malta: The Guardian of Future Generations**

#### Creation

In 2012.

# Composition

The Guardian's board (the Council) brings together individually appointed people who have been appointed on the basis of their background and expertise. The aim is to find people with a background in the economic, social and environmental sphere.

#### **Number of members**

4 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

Members are appointed by the prime minister (chair) and the government for a term of three years.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The method of appointment, on a personal basis, guarantees the independence of the Council members and the Council.

#### Secretariat

No secretariat of its own. Secretarial support provided by government.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council is tasked with representing the interests of the future generations of the island of Malta. This includes developing a research network that deals with sustainable development and proposing research projects in all areas relating to sustainable development.

#### Mission

The Council must integrate the principles of sustainable development as a mainstream element of the government's work and promote the concept of sustainable development among private sector players and in society at large.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to national sustainable development policies.
- 2. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of study days, the sustainable development press award and publications.

#### Type of requests received

The Council mainly provides advice and reflections on strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus which relate to sustainable development in its widest sense.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council primarily reports to the government, but it is also tasked with ensuring the broad participation of public and private organisations, as well as citizens, in order to support the sustainable development transition.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

No further information available.

#### Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

# What stands out?

The Maltese Guardian only has members whose seat on the board based on their personal background and expertise. In addition to the traditional advisory role of advising the

government, it is striking that the Guardian is also tasked with developing a research network that deals with sustainable development and that research proposals must be made in all areas relating to sustainable development. In addition to this Guardian, there is also a network that deals with the participation of civil society parties in the field of sustainable development.

#### More information

The Guardian of Future Generations

# The Netherlands: Council for the Environment and Infrastructure/Rli

#### Creation

By law in 2012.

# Composition

The Council consists of ten members drawn from public administration, the business community and the scientific community. Council members are appointed on the basis of their personal abilities and do not represent any organisation or institution.

#### **Number of members**

10 members plus 3 junior members.

# **Appointment of members**

Appointments are made on the basis of a government decision. Council members are appointed for a term of four years. Council members are selected on the basis of their personal abilities, taking into account their background. Similar to the situation in Ireland, anyone can apply for a role as an expert member of the Council. A selection is then made based on their experience and skills and the government makes the appointment.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

Under the Dutch Advisory Bodies Framework Act, Council members must decide independently on the research methods to be used and on the content of the recommendations to be published. The Council also ensures that members meet the criteria for independence and expertise in order to be eligible for appointment. This means that the government has no means of removing a Council member from office before his or her formal term of office expires.

# Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own independent secretariat. The secretariat is an administrative part of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli) is the strategic advisory body for the government and parliament within the wide remit of the physical living environment.

# Mission

By adopting an integrated approach and giving advice at a strategic level, the Council aims to contribute to the deepening and widening of the political and social debate and to the quality of the decision-making process.

#### **Focus**

The wide remit of the physical environment and infrastructure.

#### **Function**

1. Advising the government on all measures relating to the physical environment.

#### Type of requests received

The Council is not tasked with responding to requests to review proposed laws. However, the Council's advice is a response both to strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus and to specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to government and parliament but also identifies challenges for relevant actors in its recommendations. The Council does have a strict mandate, however, as it only advises on issues that play a role within the Dutch national borders.

## Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The government can ask for advice, but the Council is also free to put an advisory subject on the agenda itself and to address it. The government is under no obligation to seek the Council's opinion in any particular case.

## Response of the institution(s) addressed

The advice is public and the government is obliged to respond and indicate what it is doing or intends to do with the advice. This response is given in a letter addressed to parliament.

## What stands out?

Traditionally, advisory bodies have played an important role in the political and administrative system of the Netherlands. External government advisory bodies were included in the Constitution in 1922 by means of a Troelstra amendment. Their origins lie partly in compartmentalisation and corporatism. Despite the rich tradition of policy advice, major changes have taken place. In 2012, the most recent change was introduced in the councils that advise on matters such as the environment and rural areas. The merger of the "different blood groups" into a single council has proved to be not only a human challenge, but also a challenge in terms of content. To conclude, similar to its colleagues of the German SRU, the Rli also faces the challenge of prioritising the issues on which to give advice."

#### More information

Council for the Environment and Infrastructure

Portugal: National Council on the Environment and Sustainable Development/CNADS

#### Creation:

By lay in 1998, revised in 2004.

## Composition

The Council is made up of both representatives of civil society organisations and experts who sit on the Council in an individual capacity. Council members are appointed for a term of three years.

#### **Number of members**

34 members.

## **Appointment of members**

25% of Council members, often academics, are appointed by the government. The remaining 75% of Council members are appointed by civil society organisations such as trade unions, the industrial sector, and environmental NGOs. There are also two representatives of local institutions on the Council. Since 2004, it has also been possible to elect researchers who are not affiliated to a university to sit on the Council. The chair of the Council has been appointed by the prime minister of Portugal.

## Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The law states that the Council is an independent advisory body. The independence of Council members is enshrined in law in this respect. The fact that Council members cannot be replaced by the government (unless in the event of death, voluntary resignation or a decision by the courts) is also a guarantee of the independent position of Council members.

#### Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own secretariat. The secretariat is an administrative part of the Portuguese Ministry of the Environment.

# The Council's general terms of reference

Portugal's National Council on the Environment and Sustainable Development is tasked with including in its membership the participation of different social, cultural and economic forces in a platform aimed at reaching a broad consensus on environmental and sustainability policies. The European dimension also plays an important role. The Council advises its government on EU issues, and incorporates EU developments into the recommendations it makes at national level. These powers are regulated by law. An additionally is the legal authority to advise on cases in which Portugal cooperates with the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP).

#### **Focus**

The Council focuses on both traditional environmental issues and sustainable development in general.

# **Functions**

- 2. Advising the government on all measures relating to national policies on sustainable development and the environment.
- 3. Serving as a platform for the exchange of ideas on sustainable development. This includes organising stakeholder dialogues.
- 4. Providing information and raising awareness about sustainable development among citizens, private individuals and public bodies. This mainly takes the form of study days and publications.

## Type of requests received

The Council receives requests relating to strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus, specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to government and parliament but also identifies challenges for relevant actors in its recommendations. In view of the fact that, in addition to government organisations, environmental organisations can also ask for advice, the advice often focuses on a wider range of actors.

## Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Portuguese Council occupies a fairly unique position. For example, the government is obliged to seek advice from the Council on the following specific portfolios: Framework Environmental Law; National Strategy on Nature Conservation and Biological Diversity; National Plan on Environment Policy; National Strategy on Sustainable Development. However, in addition to the government, environmental organisations are also free to seek the Council's advice; this is unique. The Council itself also has the right to take up issues on which to give advice.

## Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

#### What stands out?

The Council is often regarded as a civil society council, but there is an interesting detail that raises the question of whether this is justified. Although some of the participants are appointed by civil society and by local authorities, the councillors are appointed in their own name. In other words, an organisation cannot make any changes with regard to the person representing it for a period of three years. In a way, this means that the Portuguese Council is at a crossroads between a council made up of members appointed on the basis of their own stature and background, and a civil society council.

Looking at the relationship between the Council and the advice-seeking government body, Portugal also stands out. The Portuguese Council is again at a crossroads. Although the Council does include representatives of regional and local authorities, the advice-seeking government body is not represented. This means that it is in fact an independent council where, at first sight, it appears to be a government-affiliated council.

The Portuguese are also in a unique position when it comes to requests for advice. For example, the Portuguese Council is the only council that can receive requests for advice, in addition to the government, from environmental organisations, which do not necessarily sit on the Council. The Portuguese government is also obliged to consult the Council on a wide range of environment-related and sustainable development portfolios.

#### More information

National Council on the Environment and Sustainable Development

Slovakia: Council of the Slovak Republic for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development To be updated soon.

## **Spain: National Council for Sustainable Development**

#### Creation

The council was established by law in February 2019.

## Composition

The Sustainable Development Council will be composed of A) the person holding the Presidency (the High Commissioner for 2030 Agenda), B) forty-eight people representing civil society/business and science and C) two representatives of the inter-territorial cooperation body.

#### **Number of members**

51 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed by the High Commissioner for 2030 Agenda, at the nomination of the corresponding organizations or institutions.

## Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

Council members are nominated to the High Commissioner by the organizations or institutions they will represent in the Council.

#### Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Sustainable Development Council will correspond to the Director-General of the Office of the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Sustainable Development Council forms part of and complements the governance structure for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Spain. It is a collegiate body that embodies the participation of civil society in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### Focus

To contribute to the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

#### **Functions**

- 1. It advises the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda in the preparation and implementation of the plans and strategies necessary for compliance with the 2030 agenda.
- 2. It generates documents and analysis on aspects of implementation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- 3. It contributes to the dissemination and communication of the 2030 Agenda to the whole of the Spanish population.
- 4. It promotes dialogue between all social, economic and cultural agents to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

# What sector(s) of society does the Council advise?

The council advices the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, but also addresses the whole of the Spanish population.

#### What stands out?

The council is a civil society council with a large number of members, a civil society council in which not only civil society meets but also in which government and the scientific community participates. As in France, the high commissioner for Sustainable Development, chairs the council. With only two scheduled sessions a year (except when a quorum calls for an extraordinary meeting) the Council follows the Finnish Sustainable Development Commission its approach.

#### **Further information**

No designated website available.

# Spain: Environment Advisory Council of Spain/CAMA

#### Creation

In 1994 by royal decree, with several reforms since then.

## Composition

The Council consists of 15 members drawn from civil society, employers, trade unions, farmers' unions, nature NGOs and other representatives. In addition, members from local and regional authorities also sit on the Council, but they are not voting members. The Council is chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Environment.

# **Number of members**

15 members.

#### **Appointment of members**

Appointments are made on the basis of a government decision. Council members are appointed for a term of two years and are eligible for re-election. As with the majority of civil society councils, the government appoints candidates proposed by the organisations that sit on the Council.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The method of appointment, on a personal basis, guarantees the independence of the Council members and the Council. The appointment procedure is enshrined in law.

#### Secretariat

The Council has its own secretariat which, for administrative reasons, has been assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Environment.

# The Council's general terms of reference

The Council was established to advise the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Environment and the rest of the national government on the preparation of policy relating to the environment and sustainable development.

#### **Focus**

The Council focuses on environmental issues and sustainable development, devoting specific attention to sustainable land use, nature protection and biodiversity.

#### Mission

The Council was established to protect the environment and nature as well as biodiversity and to serve as a platform for public participation and dialogue on sustainable land use, nature protection and biodiversity.

#### **Functions**

- 3. Advising the government on all measures relating to national policies on sustainable development and the environment.
- 4. Serving as a platform in order to promote the transfer of knowledge and dialogue between public authorities, academia and civil society in the field of sustainable development and to support the involvement of the economic and social sectors in the process of sustainable development in Catalonia.
- 5. Providing information and raising awareness about environmental and sustainability issues, aimed at the public, private individuals and public bodies.

## Type of requests received

The Council receives both specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus and requests to review proposed laws.

## Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to government as a whole.

## Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council has the freedom to put advisory items on the agenda itself or the minister issues requests. However, the government is under no obligation to consult the Council.

## Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

#### What stands out?

The Council is a civil society council that is chaired by "its own minister" and, to this end, is an embedded council. Although Council members have a short term of office (two years), their (independent) position is firmly secured in a royal decree, supported by their own constitution. This is similar to the situation in Federal Belgium.

It is striking that the Council mainly refers to environment-related issues in terms of its name, focus and vision, although sustainable development is also part of its remit. How this relationship is expressed in practice has not been investigated. It is also noteworthy that the Council mainly focuses on a) responding to legislative proposals and b) publishing recommendations and advice on issues relating to a particular policy area that are aimed at developing specific government policy.

## **Further information**

No designated website available.

## **Sweden: Scientific Council for Sustainable Development**

#### Creation

By government decision in 2015 (no legal mandate).

#### Composition

The Council is made up of twelve university professors from different backgrounds. Council members each have specific knowledge and expertise in the field of sustainable development. Council members are drawn from the scientific community and must not be or have been recently associated with a special interest group.

#### **Number of members**

12 members.

## **Appointment of members**

Council members are appointed by the government.

# Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The independence of the Council members is guaranteed by the fact that they are appointed in a personal capacity.

#### Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own secretariat, which is part of the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

## The Council's general terms of reference

The Council is tasked with providing a scientific contribution to various initiatives in the field of sustainability. The Council was also established to provide the government with a scientific basis for sustainable development.

## Mission

The Council is intended to be an arena for dialogue between the government and the scientific community and provide a scientific basis (including the latest scientific knowledge) for the government's work on long-term and strategic sustainability issues.

## **Focus**

The Council focuses on sustainable development in the broadest sense of the word, with an emphatically scientific/theoretical perspective.

# **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government, not so much through the production of bulky reports but through dialogue.
- 2. Serving as a platform for dialogue between the government and the scientific community.

## Type of requests received

In accordance with the Council's terms of reference, it concentrates on strategic issues with a medium to long-term focus as well as on specific policy issues with a short to medium-term focus.

## Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to the government.

## Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

There is a lack of accurate information available in this regard.

## Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the federal government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any recommendation.

#### What stands out?

The Swedish Council is one of the few expert councils – along with the Finnish and German Councils – consisting solely of members from the academic world, working in the field of the environment and sustainable development. The difference between these councils is striking. Where the Swedes report to their government in the form of a dialogue, the German SRU issues its government with comprehensive expert reports and advisory reports and the Finnish Council in turn advises the sustainable development commission and therefore, indirectly, the government.

Sweden has a rich history of advisory councils on the environment and sustainable development. Remarkably, all of them have now been abolished and/or replaced. Ten years ago Ingeborg Niestroy wrote, in an authoritative study on advisory councils for environment and sustainable development that, "as a result of the Swedish open and stable political culture, the Minister-led MVB was unlikely to be abolished after government changes." Yet that is exactly what happened when this council was replaced by the – seemingly inactive – Miljoforskningsberedningen in 2012.

With the establishment of the Scientific Council, Sweden has taken yet another step towards organising policy advice on the subject of sustainable development. In view of past events, it is interesting to note that it was (only) a government decision that established the Council, and the Council in fact builds on the law that formed the basis of the miljövårdsberedning that originated in 1968 and was converted into the Scientific Council for Sustainable Development in 2008. This council had a mandate for the period from 2008 to 2015 and worked as an advisory body consisting of temporary committees with specific terms of reference for a specific period (sustainable city, etc.). In 2015, the Council was established in its current form.

#### More information

Scientific Council for Sustainable Development

# 2. Sub-national Advisory Councils: Two examples

Alongside national councils, there are also advisory councils on the environment and for sustainable development (hereafter: advisory councils) operating at the sub-national level. This overview includes two sub-national councils, the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia, and the Flemish Environmental Council. Both these councils are

members of the European Network of Advisory Councils on the Environment and for Sustainable Development.

## Catalonia: Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia/CADS

#### Creation

By law, in 2012.

## Composition

The Council consists of 14 members drawn from public administration, the business community and the scientific community. Council members are appointed on the basis of their personal abilities and do not represent any organisation or institution. One remarkable detail is that the CADS can also have foreign members. Currently, Miranda Schreurs has a seat on the Council. She is of American/German descent and was previously a council member at the SRU in Germany.

#### **Number of members**

14 members.

## **Appointment of members**

Appointments are based on a government decision, after members have been nominated by the chair of the Council. Council members are appointed for a term of two years and can be re-elected. Council members are selected on the basis of their personal abilities, taking into account their background. Similar to the situation in Ireland and the Netherlands, anyone can apply for a role as an expert member of the Council. A selection is then made based on their experience and skills and the government – after nomination – makes the appointment.

#### Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The independence of the Council members is guaranteed by the fact that they are appointed in a personal capacity.

The fact that the members sit on the Council on a voluntary basis also plays a role.

## Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own independent secretariat. The secretariat is an administrative part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institutional Relations and Transparency of the Catalan government.

## The Council's general terms of reference

The Council advises the government on sustainable development and in particular on the issue of integrating sustainability into policy instruments, territorial and sectoral planning, legislative and regulatory projects and into strategic projects or initiatives promoted by the government. It is also tasked with analysing the government's strategic policy for sustainable development and formulating proposals. Specific attention is focused on the topics of energy, water, food security, climate change and the green economy. In a similar way to countries such as Malta and Hungary, the Catalan Council also has the task of advising the government on the design and implementation of policies to promote education for sustainability. The EU component also plays an important role at sub-national level. The Council always gives advice within the framework of EU agreements and objectives.

#### Mission

To advise the government of Catalonia on the integration of sustainability into its policies and actions. To this end, it makes recommendations in matters of sustainable development, taking into account the complex realities and challenges at systemic level, as well as the diversity of actors who are part of Catalan society.

#### **Function**

1. Advising the government on all measures relating to sub-national policy on sustainable development.

# Type of requests received

The Council advises on requests relating to policy as well as on more strategic overarching requests.

# Recipient(s) of the recommendations

The Council formally reports to government and parliament but also identifies challenges for relevant actors in its advice.

## Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The Council advises the Catalan government both on request and on its own initiative. Although the government does not officially have to consult the Council, a situation has arisen in which it is the lead in the sub-national implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This process requires the Council to be consulted/involved in practice.

## Response of the institution(s) addressed

As a formally addressed institution, the government is not legally required to issue a formal response to any opinion.

#### More information

Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia

#### Flanders: Environment and Nature Council of Flanders/Minaraad

#### Creation:

By law, in 2003.

## Composition

Minaraad has 24 Council members with voting rights, eight of which represent the environmental associations, six the socio-economic organizations, two the open space organizations, two the socio-cultural organizations that represent consumer/family interests, and two for the provinces and the cities/municipalities, plus four independent experts. A deputy member has also been appointed for each of these (with the exception of the independent experts).

#### **Number of members**

28 members.

## **Appointment of members**

Minaraad is made up of twenty-four members appointed by the Flemish Government for a term of office of four years. The chair of Minaraad is appointed by the Flemish Government from among the members, in accordance with a list of rotation. The chair is appointed for a term of one year.

The four independent experts are appointed after a public call for candidature. Eighteen representatives are appointed at the nomination of the civil society organizations (environmental associations, socio-economic organizations representing the interests of consumers and families). Two members are appointed at the nomination of the organizations that represent the Flemish cities and municipalities or Flemish provinces. These organizations are also requested in writing to provide nominations.

## Mechanism to guarantee the independence of members

The members of Minaraad are completely independent from the Flemish Government in the performance of their position (article 11.3.3). Additionally, any nominating organization can replace its representatives at any time. Whenever the representative of a civil society organization voluntarily steps down, the deputy assumes the vacant position automatically, by operation of law. The Flemish Government then designates a new deputy at the nomination of the organization.

#### Secretariat

The Council is supported by its own secretariat. A total of 9 people work at the Minaraad's secretariat.

#### The Council's general terms of reference

Minaraad is a strategic advisory council for spatial & environmental policy within the Flemish Government. Minaraad issues its recommendations, at its own initiative or at the request of the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament, on environmental policy and/or the environmental aspects of sustainable development.

## **Focus**

Minaraad follows and interprets developments in society and policy developments relating to the environment and the environmental aspects of sustainable development, and contributes to the formation of a policy vision on environmental policy or the environmental aspects of sustainable development.

#### **Functions**

- 1. Advising the government on all measures relating to regional policy on the environment and participating in policy dialogues with members of the government.
- 2. Serving as a forum for the exchange of ideas on environmental policies. This includes the organisation of dialogues with stakeholders in preparation for the drafting of recommendations within the statutory bodies, working groups and forums.

#### Type of requests received

- Preliminary drafts of decrees relating to environmental policy
- Preliminary drafts of decrees pertaining to other policy domains and which could have a substantial impact on the environment
- Decree resolutions of the Flemish Government relating to environmental policy and which are of strategic importance

The recommendations of Minaraad may also pertain to:

- Draft proposals relating to environmental policy, environmental policy-related issues or other policy domains, and which could have a substantial impact on the environment
- Draft decisions of the Flemish Government relating to environmental policy and which are not of strategic importance
- Policy memoranda submitted by the Flemish Parliament on environmental policy and on the environmental aspects of sustainable development
- Drafts of cooperation agreements that the Flemish Region seeks to enter into with the federal government or with the other regions
- Federal plans of strategic importance to environmental policy or the environmental aspects of sustainable development
- EU policy intentions, policy plans, or regulations, and international conventions in preparation, that are of strategic importance to environmental policy or the environmental aspects of sustainable development

In addition, Minaraad receives requests for recommendations from other governmental bodies. These requests a may also be dictated by decrees, decisions, etc.

## What sector(s) of society does the Council advise?

The Council formally reports its recommendations to the government, but the Council and its members do in fact fulfil a broader role.

# Formulation of recommendations (official request / own initiative)

The general executive establishes the agenda for the meetings of the Council. The members of the general executive, the committee chairs and the Council members may propose an agenda item for the meeting by request in writing to the general executive, stating the reasons for the agenda item. As the first agenda item in any meeting, the Council adopts the definitive agenda. A Council member or his/her deputy, or the chair or a committee chair of a permanent working commission may propose adding an agenda item to the agenda if discussion of this item is urgent. This should preferably be done by means of the submission of a memorandum. The Council will make a determination on the urgent nature and appropriateness of the request before definitively adopting the agenda.

## More information

**Environment and Nature Council of Flanders** 

# **EEAC Network**

Bezuidenhoutseweg 30 P.O. Box 27 2501 CA The Hague The Netherlands www.eeac.eu