



EU News, Policy Positions
& EU Actors online

31 July 2009

EU launches reflection on future green policies

Published: Tuesday 28 July 2009

The European Union needs to reconcile its growth and jobs objectives with long-term environmental goals, says the European Commission in a report taking stock of the bloc's decade-old sustainable development strategy.

Background:

The European Union first formulated its Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) during a 2001 European summit in Gothenburg. Although sustainable development is enshrined in the EU treaties, policy implementation remains a problem.

The European Commission's first stocktaking of the strategy confirmed that a number of unsustainable trends were continuing to worsen. It also highlighted the controversial relationship between the SDS and the Lisbon Agenda for growth and jobs.

A June 2006 summit of EU leaders saw the adoption of a [renewed SDS strategy](#). It addresses **seven main challenges**: climate change and clean energy; sustainable transport; sustainable consumption and production; conservation and management of natural resources; public health; social inclusion, demography and migration; and global poverty.

Global demand for natural resources is growing fast, European fish stocks are depleting and forests and soils are increasingly challenged by climate change, says the [report](#), published on 24 July.

With its recently adopted climate and energy package, the EU has made a positive contribution to sustainable development, but "unsustainable trends persist in several areas," notes the report, which assesses progress made since the Union launched its sustainable development strategy in 2001.

The EU executive estimates the annual loss of ecosystem services equivalent to €50 billion and the cumulated welfare losses are estimated equivalent to 7% of GDP by 2050.

Decoupling transport volumes from economic growth also remains a challenge and freight transport has even grown "faster than GDP", notes the report.

Towards renewed priorities

The report launches a reflection on how the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) should evolve in the future and how it could be better aligned with other cross-cutting EU strategies.

The Commission particularly stresses the need to find greater synergy with the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, which will be reviewed in 2010. The report calls for better coordination and linkage between climate change, energy, financial and social sustainability - policy areas covered by both strategies.

According to the EU executive, the SDS could be reviewed to better contribute to "a rapid shift to a low-carbon and low-input economy, based on energy and resource-efficient technologies and sustainable transport, and shifts towards sustainable consumption behaviour".

The progress report will now be handed to EU leaders, who are expected to review priorities and provide orientation for the future strategy later this year.

In parallel, the EU is starting to reflect on [revising](#) its 2000 Lisbon Strategy, which sought to turn the EU into the "most competitive economy in the world by 2010". 'Green growth' and environmental sustainability are likely to feature high among the strategy's new priorities.

Save time. Select the policy news you need.

Choose from among EurActiv's 21 free policy newsletters. Now more timely and user-friendly.

To subscribe:

...type your email address here

Subscribe