Sustainable Development in Estonia

The legal basis for sustainable development in Estonia is provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, which entered into force in 1992. The Act on Sustainable Development was approved in 1995. According to the amendment of this Act in 1997, long-term plans on sustainable development are to be elaborated in the energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, tourism, chemical industry, building materials industry and food industry sectors.

Estonian active partnership in the global level sustainable development processes started at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) in 1992 and implementation of the Agenda 21 and Millennium Development Goals were renewed at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

In accordance with national necessity and global agreements Estonia drew up its National Strategy on Sustainable Development, which was approver by *Riigikogu* (the Estonian Parliament) in September 2005.

Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development (SE21) is an integral conception clearly focused on sustainability of long-term development of the Estonian state and society until the year 2030. The general development of the country in to integrate the requirement to be successful in global competition with a sustainable development model and preservation of the traditional values of Estonia. According to the Strategy the long-term goals for the development of the society are:

- ***Viability of the Estonian cultural space*** - According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the state of Estonia shall ensure the preservation of the Estonian nature and culture through the ages. Sustainability of the Estonian nation and culture constitutes the cornerstone of sustainable development of Estonia;
- ***Growth of welfare*** - Welfare is defined as the satisfaction of material, social and cultural needs of individuals, accompanied by opportunities for individual self-realisation and for realising one's aspirations and goals;
- ***Coherent society*** - Achievement of the first two goals will be possible only if the benefits from these goals can be used by the majority of population and the price for achieving these goals is not destructive for the society as an integral organism;
- ***Ecological balance*** - Maintenance of ecological balance in the nature of Estonia is the central precondition for our sustainability. It is also our contribution to global development, following the principle that requires a balance both in matter cycles and in flows of energy at all levels of the living environment.

The Strategy was designed as a feedback-based process and its commonly valued development goals will be realised with contributions from a broad range of actors. A multi-stakeholder and open approach as well as involvement of public raises awareness and increases productive participation of inhabitants in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. Sustainable development goals defined by the Strategy form the general bases for the Estonian positions on development processes at different levels and provide basis for integration of environmental considerations into other, particularly economic and social spheres.

Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development was founded in 1996 as an advisory body to the Government on the issues of sustainable development. The Commission is chaired by the Prime Minister and co-chaired by the Ministers of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Environment. It consists of representatives of public authorities, scientific and business communities and NGO-s. The Commission analyses the national policy of sustainable development and draws up relevant recommendations and proposals for submission to the Government.

Strategy Bureau of the State Chancellery is co-ordinating the implementation and reporting processes of the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development. In accordance with the general principles of sustainable development based on the three main pillars, all the related ministries are responsible for implementing of sustainable development goals, monitoring and reporting in their respective fields. To cover the cross-cutting issues and inter-linkages, an inter-ministerial working group

at the Deputy Secretary General level was established in 2007. The Working Group is organised on the network bases and co-ordinated by the Strategy Bureau of the State Chancellery.

Regional level

Estonia was one of the 11 countries launching the regional sustainable development co-operation process **Baltic Agenda 21** in 1996. The main document of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region was adopted in 1998. The overall aim of the process is constantly improve the living and working conditions of all inhabitants of the Baltic Sea region within the framework of sustainable development, sustainable management of the natural resources and protection of the environment.

EU level

Estonia is implementing the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the first implementation report is now **available** http://www.riigikantselei.ee/?id=72868

The dashboard of Sustainability can be found at the homepage of the Statistical Office of Estonia. The dashboard displays the core set of sustainability indicators for European countries and the regions/counties of Estonia on maps as well as the performance valuation of countries/regions/counties. Reliable environmental information and generalised data on Estonian nature, state of environment and different influencing factors is available at the homepage of the Estonian Environment Information Centre.

In 2006 the Estonian Ministry Of Environment and the Environmental Information Centre (in cooperation with experts from scientific and other institutions) launched a project of renewal and developing for the system of environmental indicators. The project includes removing some parameters that have lost their importance as indicators, and adding some new ones. Also the structure of the system will be brought up-to-date. One of the tasks of the project is to create a modern database-related and user-friendly web page.

The system and the first set of environmental indicators were developed in 1998 by the DADAM project team. DADAM (Improvement of Data Use and Data Management within the Environmental Monitoring Programme) project was an international cooperative project, funded by EU (Phare 1994, Programme for Pollution Monitoring and Enforcement Legislation). The main aim was to create a system of measured or statistical parameters, describing the state of environment in Estonia. This system would also serve as the basis for producing and publishing periodical environmental reports.

The first set of environmental indicators was divided into 13 themes (the themes of first priority in the Estonian Environmental Strategy and Environmental Action Plan) with altogether 130 different parameters. While the environmental policy of a state changes with time, the set of environmental indicators must change too - all indicators and themes must be periodically reviewed for better compliance with national environmental policy and international obligations.

Environmental indicators have been selected in accordance with Estonian Environmental Strategy and Environmental Action Plan. Environmental problems in need of special interest are:

- Decrease in biological diversity;
- State and area of natural landscapes;
- Antropogenic eutrophication in inland water bodies and coastal sea;
- Climate change (global warming and its consequences);
- Depletion of the ozone layer;
- Quality of ambient air;
- Toxic contamination;
- Water abstraction;
- Use of fish stocks;
- Use of peat deposits;
- Use of forest resources;
- Waste generation;

Important driving forces for changes in the state of environment are some socio-economic processes. In environmental reviews trends in industry, energetic and population structure complement the themes listed above. Themes are divided into groups of parameters. These groups merge

parameters of more specific subject (see http://eelis.ic.envir.ee:88/seireveeb/envirind_avalik/index.php?l=en&t1=AVALEHT&t2=&t3=&t4=).

Environmentally-friendly Consumption in Estonia

Environmentally-friendly (sustainable) consumption means a well-informed choice of people (citizens, the private and the state sector) for the benefit of goods or services, which have the smallest possible impact on the environment, by preferring the use of ecological technologies, long usable life, recycling, favourable renewal and reprocessing possibilities or joint use.

Consumption may be turned more sustainable in two main ways:

- By decreasing material consumption by more effective organisation of consumption;
- By spreading knowledge about reasonable and environmentally sustainable consumption.

Labelling of Environmentally-friendly Products

Environmental labels and declarations have been taken into use in the world in order to provide the possible consumer of a product possibility to find and buy products, which have a minimum impact on the environment.

Environment-related labels can be generally divided into three groups as follows:

- Labels (eco-labels) issued by independent institutions ("First type" according to ISO classification), which are based on several criteria and the analysis of the life cycle of the product.
- Self-declared labels ("Second type" according to ISO classification). These include labels and declarations with which producers and resellers advertise environmentally-friendly qualities of their products.
- Other labels connected with the environment (energy labels, eco-tourism labels, organic production labels, etc.)

Several environmental labels are used also in Estonia, but unfortunately these are not widely-spread. Some of these are in the development stage, some need financial assistance.

Estonian Green Movement initiated the campaign of an environmentally-friendly product in May 2003. The aim of the campaign was to invite people to prefer more environmentally-friendly products. One way to differentiate environmentally-friendly products is by labelling them with special "eco-labels". There are several goods with such labels in Estonian stores.

Buy Nothing Day

Buy Nothing Day is celebrated on the last Friday in November, in the framework of which people are invited to give up excessive consumption. The aim of the Buy Nothing Day is to make people deliberate over the reasonability of their purchases while the pre-Christmas buying fever is increasing, and also over the environmental and social impact of excessive consumption. During the whole last decade organisations fighting against wasteful consumption habits have organised colourful actions within the framework of the Buy Nothing Day in order to bring the message of avoiding excessive consumption and unnecessary purchases to the buyers.

Sustainable consumption in Sweden: 16 environmental objectives

The Swedish Riksdag has adopted environmental quality objectives in 16 areas. The objectives define the quality and state of Sweden's environment and of its natural and cultural resources that are sustainable in the long term. Each year the Environmental Objectives Council reports to the Government on the progress we have made towards our environmental objectives.

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The three broader issues related to the objectives are designed to address complementing aspects of work towards the environmental objectives.

Three action strategies have been defined to ensure coordinated, efficient work towards the sixteen environmental quality objectives.

The Environmental Objectives Council monitors progress towards the environmental objectives and reports on it to the Government.

The environmental objectives pervade Sweden's environmental work at the national, regional and local levels. The national agencies, county administrative boards and local authorities are in the forefront of efforts to bring about a good living environment. All sectors of society must contribute to achieving this objective. The Environmental Objectives Council monitors progress towards the environmental objectives and reports on it to the Government each year. The Council's annual reports are known as the *de Facto* Reports. Every four years the Council also carries out an in-depth evaluation, assessing progress towards the objectives and proposing further measures.

Many ongoing activities impact on numerous environmental problems, therefore some remedial measures taken can result in progress towards more than one environmental objective. In view of this, the Riksdag has directed that efforts to implement the environmental objectives will be channelled into three action strategies:

- a strategy for more efficient energy use and transport – in order to reduce emissions from the energy and transport sectors
- a strategy for non-toxic and resource-efficient cyclical systems, including an integrated product policy — in order to create energy- and material-efficient cyclical systems and reduce diffuse emissions of toxic pollutants
- a strategy for the management of land, water and the built environment – in order to meet the need for greater consideration for biological diversity, the cultural environment and human health, wise management of land and water, environmentally sound land use planning and a sustainable built environment.

The Environmental Objectives Council reports annually to the Government on developments relating to the environmental objectives. Every four years the Council also produces an in-depth evaluation as input to decisions on continued work.

The local authorities are responsible at the local level for providing a good living environment.The Swedish Riksdag has also given them the overall responsibility for the local refinement of the national environmental and public health objectives.The local authorities have the important task of conducting a dialogue with their citizens about the way to achieve the local environmental objectives. The dialogue is important as a way of informing people about the environmental objectives and bedding them down in the community, and as a way of implementing the actions necessary to achieve them.Local authorities can integrate environmental objectives into existing,

environmentally relevant local processes, such as infrastructure planning, the development of traffic systems, the development and conservation of green areas, energy and water supply, property and housing development, and the care and protection of our cultural heritage. Other useful instruments for local authorities include referring to environmental objectives when exercising their supervisory functions, and writing environmental requirements into tender documents.Many local authorities, almost 80 per cent out of 290 in total, have adopted local environmental objectives and strategies or are working to produce them.

The County Administrative Boards have the overarching role as regional coordinators of work towards the environmental objectives. The County Administrative Boards work with other regional bodies and agencies, and in dialogue with local authorities, the business sector, non-governmental organisations and other players, to ensure that the environmental objectives and interim targets are implemented in their respective counties.

In consultation with the Environmental Objectives Council, each County Administrative Board undertakes 15 out of the 16 environmental objectives, recasting them in precise, concrete terms to fit the circumstances of its own region. The Sustainable Forests objective is the responsibility of the Swedish Forest Agency in cooperation with the County Administrative Boards. The County Administrative Boards provide local authorities with data and documentation and assist them in formulating local targets and action programmes.

Issues of regional development and infrastructure are closely intertwined with environmental and planning issues. The County Administrative Boards, together with the local authorities and regional councils, are responsible for coordinating land use planning with regional and environmental policies.

The County Administrative Boards also coordinate the monitoring of progress towards the environmental objectives in their respective regions. They report to the Government on this task once each year. RUS, a cooperative project run by the County Administrative Boards, develops and reports on regional indicators relating to the national environmental quality objectives.

To ensure a clear division of the responsibility for efforts to implement the sixteen national environmental quality objectives, the Government has appointed one specific national agency to be responsible for one specific objective.

The 16 environmental quality objectives define the necessary characteristics (qualities) of our natural environment and our cultural heritage environment in order to ensure environmentally sustainable development. The Riksdag has decided that Sweden's environmental work is to set out from 16 national environmental objectives. A number of agencies are entrusted by the Government with responsibility for these objectives, with an Environmental Objectives Council set up to act in a coordinating role.

Fifteen national environmental objectives were adopted by the Riksdag in 1999. They define the necessary characteristics (qualities) of our natural environment and our cultural heritage environment in order to ensure environmentally sustainable development. In November 2005 a further objective, A Rich Diversity of Plant and Animal Life, was added to the previous fifteen. Since then, Sweden's environmental work has been based on these sixteen environmental quality objectives.

The 16 environmental quality objectives are defined in general terms. They are fleshed out by interim targets, of which there are currently 72. The interim targets refine the focus and time frame of the general objectives.

The aims of the environmental objectives are:

- To promote human health;
- To safeguard biodiversity and the natural environment;
- To foster our cultural heritage environment and cultural-historical values;
- To preserve the long-term productivity of our ecosystems;
- To ensure good management of natural resources;

The 16 environmental quality objectives:

- **Reduced Climate Impact:** The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change provides for the stabilization of concentrations of greenhouse ... The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change provides for the stabilization of concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at levels which ensure that human activities do not have a harmful impact on the climate system.

This goal must be achieved in such a way and at such a pace that biological diversity is preserved, food production is assured and other goals of sustainable development are not jeopardized. Sweden, together with other countries, must assume responsibility for achieving this global objective.

- **Clean Air:** The air must be clean enough not to represent a risk to human health or to animals, plants or cultural assets.
- **Natural Acidification Only**: The acidifying effects of deposition and land use must not exceed the limits that can be tolerated by soil and water ... The acidifying effects of deposition and land use must not exceed the limits that can be tolerated by soil and water. In addition, deposition of acidifying substances must not increase the rate of corrosion of technical materials or cultural artefacts and buildings.
- **A Non-Toxic Environment**: The environment must be free from man-made or extracted compounds and metals that represent a threat to human health or biological diversity.
- **A Protective Ozone Layer**: The ozone layer must be replenished so as to provide long-term protection against harmful UV radiation.
- **A Safe Radiation Environment**: Human health and biological diversity must be protected against the harmful effects of radiation in the external environment.
- **Zero Eutrophication:** Nutrient levels in soil and water must not be such that they adversely affect human health, the conditions for biological diversity or the possibility of varied use of land and water.
- **Flourishing Lakes and Streams**: Lakes and watercourses must be ecologically sustainable and their variety of habitats must be preserved. Natural productive capacity, biological diversity, cultural heritage assets and the ecological and water-conserving function of the landscape must be preserved, at the same time as recreational assets are safeguarded.
- **Good-Quality Groundwater**: Groundwater must provide a safe and sustainable supply of drinking water and contribute to viable habitats for flora and fauna in lakes and watercourses.
- **A Balanced Marine Environment**: The North Sea and the Baltic Sea must have a sustainable productive capacity, and biological diversity must be preserved. Coasts and archipelagos must be characterized by a high degree of biological diversity and a wealth of recreational, natural and cultural assets. Industry, recreation and other utilization of the seas, coasts and archipelagos must be compatible with the promotion of sustainable development. Particularly valuable areas must be protected against encroachment and other disturbance.
- **Thriving Wetlands**: The ecological and water-conserving function of wetlands in the landscape must be maintained and valuable wetlands preserved for the future.
- **Sustainable Forests**: The value of forests and forest land for biological production must be protected, at the same time as biological diversity and cultural heritage and recreational assets are safeguarded.
- **A Varied Agricultural Landscape:** The value of the farmed landscape and agricultural land for biological production and food production must be protected.
- **A Magnificent Mountain Landscape:** The pristine character of the mountain environment must be largely preserved, in terms of biological diversity, picturesque landscape, and recreational assets wealth.
- **A Good Built Environment:** Cities, towns and other built-up areas must provide a good, healthy living environment and contribute to a good regional and global environment. Natural and cultural assets must be protected and developed. Buildings and amenities must be located and designed in accordance with sound environmental principles and in such a way as to promote sustainable management of land, water and other resources.
- **A Rich Diversity of Plant and Animal Life**: Biological diversity must be preserved and used sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations.