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**Summary of the  
Public Consultation for the  
Review of the European Sustainable Development Strategy 2001**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In June 2001 the European Council adopted a Strategy on Sustainable Development. This Strategy was based on a Commission Communication issued in May 2001<sup>1</sup>. The Strategy aims to operationalise the sustainable development objectives of the European Treaties and to translate them into concrete priority actions. In the run-up to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, the Strategy was supplemented by a Communication on the external dimension of sustainable development<sup>2</sup>. This Communication was endorsed by the Barcelona European Council. The Strategy includes a commitment for a review at the start of each Commission's term in office.

In order to prepare the review, the Commission asked the European Economic and Social Committee to give an exploratory opinion. The EESC published its opinion in April 2004<sup>3</sup>.

On 30 July 2004 the Commission launched a public consultation. The consultation offered two ways to participate: an online questionnaire with 28 questions via the website "Your voice in Europe"<sup>4</sup> and a longer questionnaire which contained more background information and 65 questions, including a large number of detailed free-text questions<sup>5</sup> on the website "Sustainable Development"<sup>6</sup> of the Secretary-General. Both questionnaires were open to the general public until 31 October 2004.

In terms of the number of replies, the public consultation was a success: 1 100 organisations and individuals from across the European Union and from third countries responded. The Commission received contributions from many individuals and from non-governmental organisations, public authorities, business associations, companies, trade unions, think tanks and academic institutions.

The two questionnaires were structured as follows:

1. Policy context
2. Sustainability and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy
3. Taking stock of progress since 2001
  - Part A. Reviewing the six priority issues
  - Part B. Reviewing changes in the way we make policies
  - Part C. Measuring and reporting on our progress
4. Linking the EU Sustainable Development Strategy to global and national strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2001)264 final of 15 May 2001

<sup>2</sup> COM(2002)82 final of 13 February 2002

<sup>3</sup> Exploratory opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on assessing the EU sustainable development strategy, 28 April 2004

<sup>4</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/index_en.htm)

<sup>5</sup> SEC (2004)1042

<sup>6</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/consult\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/consult_en.htm)

In line with the Commission's general principles and standards for the consultation of interested parties<sup>7</sup>, this report describes the findings of the public consultation. It aims to reflect the wide range of opinions and ideas of all the contributions received. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the report tries to identify as objectively as possible the main trends, views and concerns arising from the contributions. In order to enhance transparency, the Commission has already published the responses received electronically to the shorter online-questionnaire on its website, respecting the anonymity of those who so requested.

The findings of the public consultation are an important contribution to the review of the Strategy on sustainable development. On 9 February 2005 the Commission set out the main orientations for the review of the current Strategy. This Communication also gives an overview of the progress made, including policy responses to the unsustainable trends and also refers to the main results of the public consultation<sup>8</sup>. The Communication will be discussed by the Council, European Parliament and the European Council. On 9 February 2005, the Commission also adopted a Communication presenting a set of sustainable development indicators to be used for monitoring. On 14/15 April 2005 a Stakeholder Conference will be organised by the European Economic and Social Committee in cooperation with the Commission in Brussels, for which this consultation will be a significant input. The Commission intends to present a proposal for a revised and updated Sustainable Development Strategy in the second half of 2005.

## **1. Statistical overview**

All interested persons and organisations were able to reply to the public consultation from 30 July until 31 October 2004. The official consultation period of three months exceeded the minimum duration of eight weeks, which the Commission considers the minimum standard for a consultation of this type. Most replies to the consultation were received towards the end of the consultation period.

The online consultation on the internet site 'Your voice in Europe' ended on 31 October. The Commission received a number of requests for an extension of the deadline for contributions to the long questionnaire. Although the consultation period was not formally extended, the Commission informed interested parties and individuals that contributions to the long questionnaire would be taken into account if a reasonable delay was respected. In order to be able to start the analysis of the contributions, the Commission accepted these additional contributions until 30 November 2004.

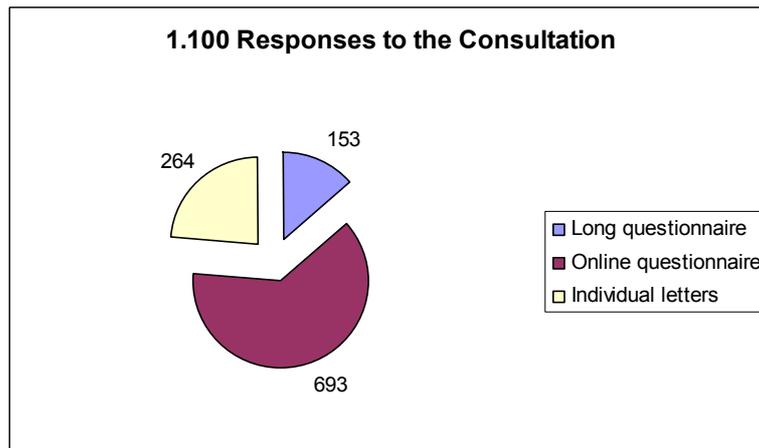
By that time, 153 contributions to the long questionnaire had been received electronically. Contributions received after that date were added as 'other contributions' to the sustainable development website of the Commission, but were not analysed as part of the public consultation exercise.

During the consultation period the Commission also received 264 (almost identical) letters replying to a limited number of questions from the questionnaire. Although these letters did not give complete answers to all questions, the Commission decided to accept them as contributions to the public consultation as well.

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<sup>7</sup> COM(2002) 704 final

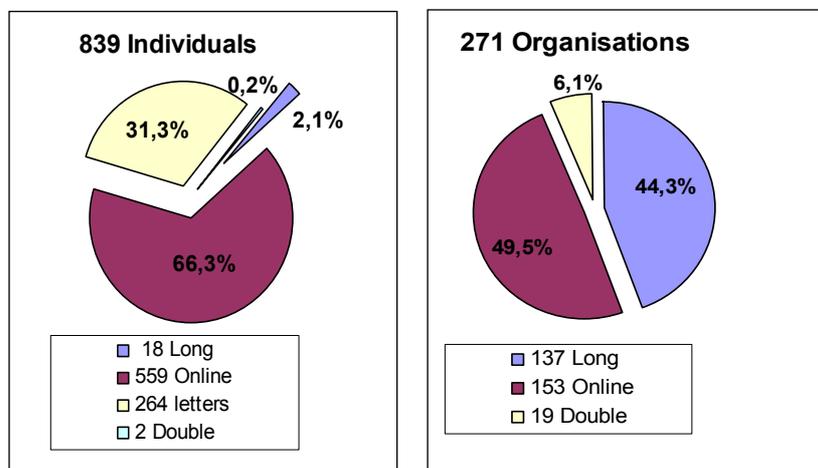
<sup>8</sup> COM(2005) 37



In total the Commission received 1 110 responses to the public consultation. This is a good result in comparison with other public consultations which have been launched since 2001.

As stated above, 153 replies were received to the long questionnaire in SEC (2004)1042. A total of 693 persons and organisations used the ‘Interactive Policy Making’ tool on the Internet Site 'Your Voice in Europe'. This is the European Commission's 'single access point' to a wide variety of consultations, discussions and other tools which enables citizens to play an active role in the European policy-making process.

The replies received were not the result of a statistical sampling procedure. Accordingly, the results of the consultation cannot be interpreted as being representative of European society as a whole. For example 264 letters were sent by individuals. Most of these letters came from members of a British non-governmental organisation for the protection of birds.



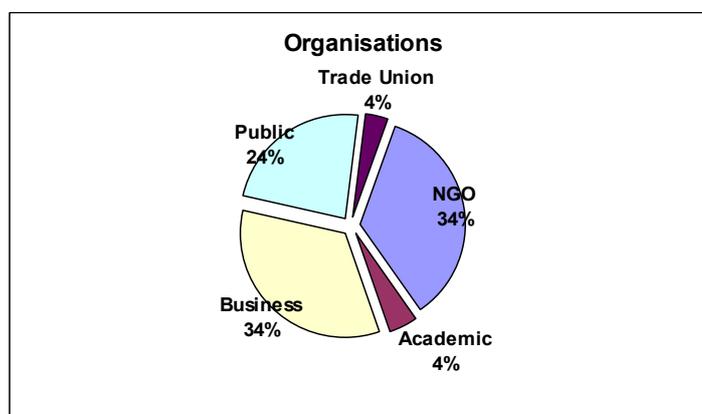
In all, 271 organisations and 839 individual persons replied to the consultation. Only a few contributed to both questionnaires. The majority of the individual contributors used the online-tool.

Out of the total of 153 replies to the long questionnaire, 137 contributions came from organisations.

Moreover, 153 organisations replied to the online questionnaire (out of a total of 693 contributions).

## 1.1 Organisations

The Commission is grateful for the in-depth contributions from organisations and the valuable comments made on different aspects of the Sustainable Development Strategy.



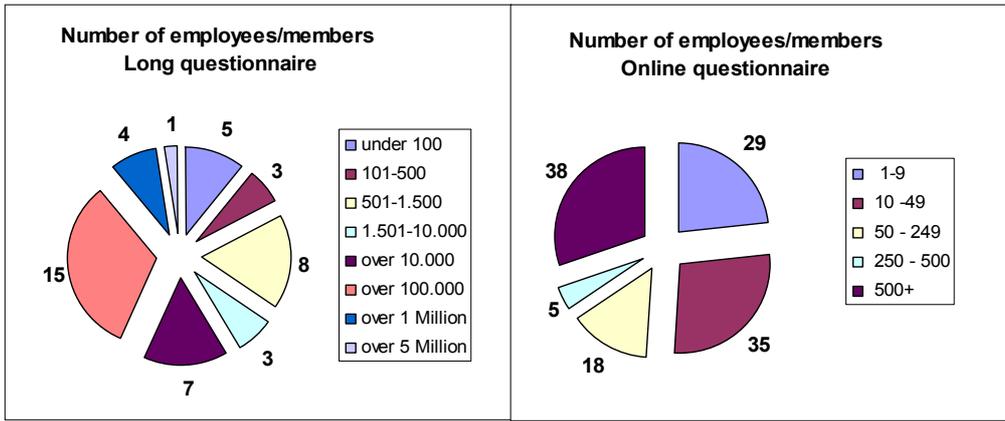
There is a remarkable balance between the replies of non-governmental organisations and companies or business associations. One third of all contributions came from businesses. An equal share was sent in by non-governmental organisations. The Commission also appreciated the contributions from seven Member State governments. Their input and the contributions made by a number of national sustainability councils or official advisory bodies show the importance attached to sustainable development in the capitals. It is also interesting to note the large number of contributions made by regional bodies and local institutions.

The selection in the table demonstrates the wide variation of different organisations answering to the consultation. Not all responders identified clearly their type of organisation.

The various organisations represent a wide range of members or individuals. It is therefore very difficult to distinguish the relative “weight” of the different organisations.

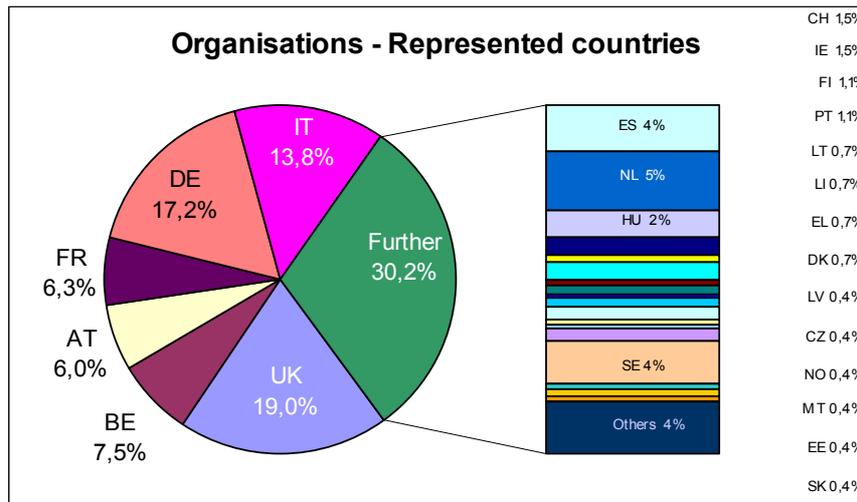
Some organisations represent only a small number of people, while others comprise 100 000 or more citizens, employees or members. A majority of organisations (65.7 %) did not make clear how many people they represent.

Examples of Types	Nr of responses.	% of total 271 Org
Government	7	2,6%
National SD Councils	5	1,8%
National, regional, local Agencies, Ministries etc.	25	9,2%
Environment	35	12,9%
Health	1	0,4%
Consumers	3	1,1%
Social issues	8	3,0%
Networks (regional to global level)	7	2,6%
Associations	39	14,4%
Companies	25	9,2%
Transport Sector	7	2,6%
Trade Sector	6	2,2%
Religious institution	1	0,4%
Think Tanks	8	3,0%



In the online questionnaire the responding organisations could choose between five categories to indicate their size. It appears that most organisations represent large numbers of people. There were 38 organisations which indicated that they had more than 500 employees or members.

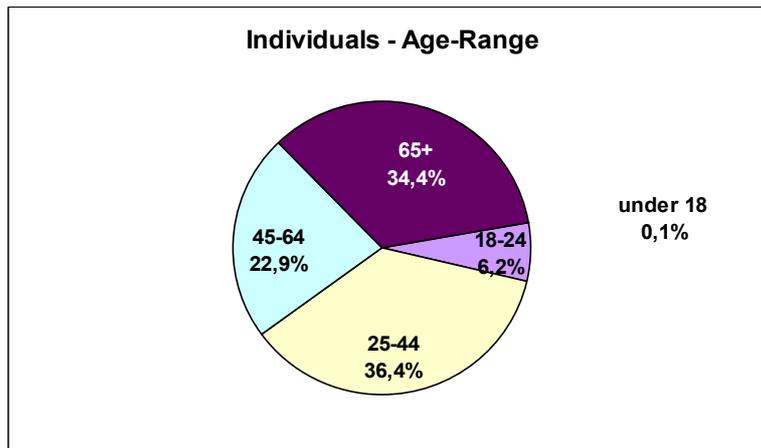
70 % of the organisations replying are situated in six member states of the European Union. Most of them come from the United Kingdom (19 %), followed by Germany (17.2 %), Italy (13.8 %), Belgium (7.5 %), France (6.3 %) and Austria (6 %).



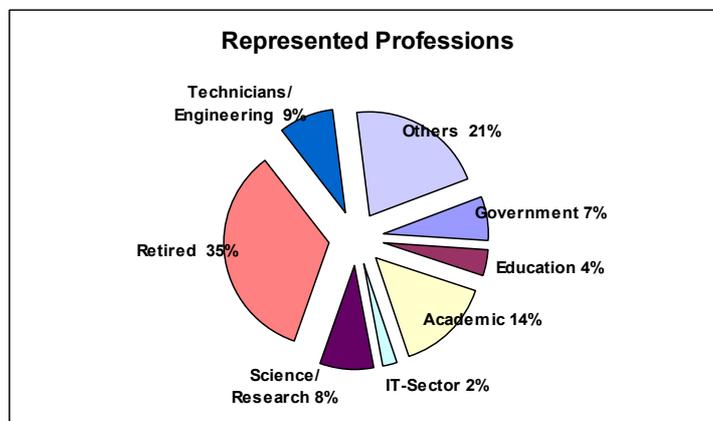
96% of the contributions come from 24 European countries and 4 % from other non-European countries. Also organisations from seven new member states participated in the consultation.

### 1.2. Individuals

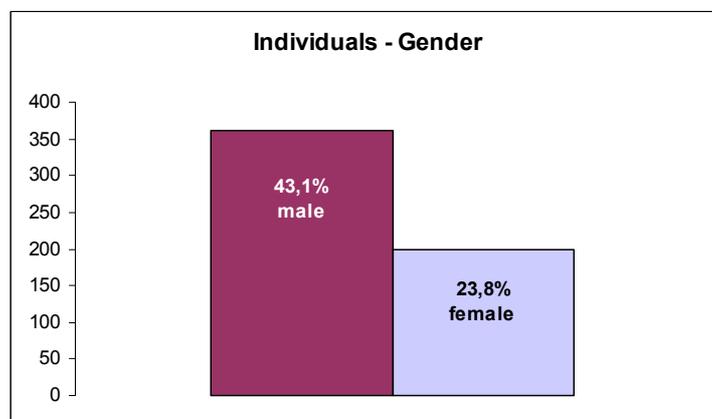
839 individual persons replied to the public consultation. Most of them answered the online questionnaire (559 – 66.6 %), 18 persons replied in detail to the long questionnaire – and two individuals replied to both. As mentioned before, 264 individuals sent (almost identical) letters to the Commission on a specific number of questions listed in the long questionnaire.



A majority of the individuals are in the age range 25 – 44, but the group of over 65 years-old is also well represented.



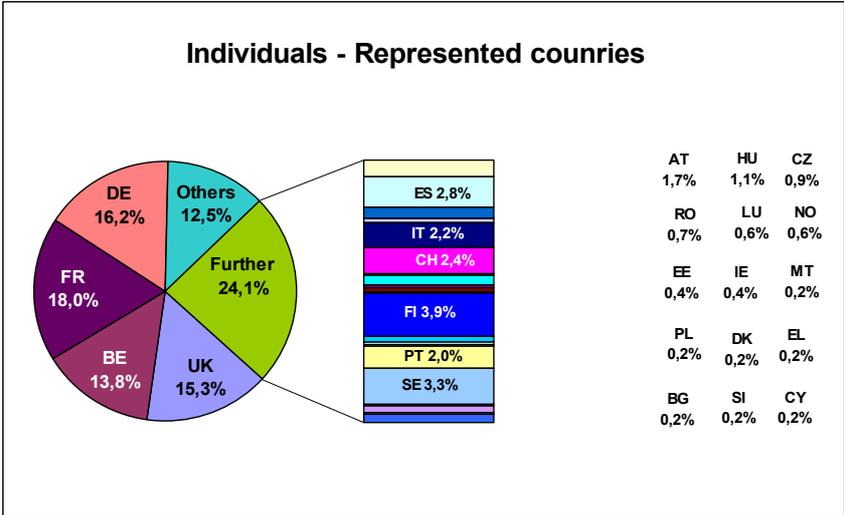
811 individual contributors gave information about their job. They have a wide variety of professions. The group of “Others” (21 %) includes managers of companies as well as freelance workers and consultants (many advise on environmental issues or policy). 35 % of the individual contributors were retired.



362 men and 200 women replied to the online questionnaire and/or the long questionnaire. In this table the gender of the 264 persons who contributed by letter is not taken into account

because in many cases it was not made clear whether the individual concerned was a man or a woman.

The contributions from individuals came from 27 European countries. More than 12 % of the individual replies came from other non-European countries.



The 264 individual letters were mainly from the UK. As regards the other contributions, 543 individuals gave information about their residence. About 63 % of the replies came from France, Germany, United Kingdom and Belgium. Individual contributions were received from nine out of the ten new Member States.

**2. Main messages and conclusions**

The public consultation shows that a large majority of the contributions agree with the overall EU approach to sustainable development. In general, contributions subscribe to the broad vision on sustainable development, the six priority issues and the new way of policymaking. However, opinions differ with respect to the weight that should be given to the individual components of the Sustainable Development Strategy and many emphasize that the Strategy has not yet been properly implemented. The Strategy is also criticised for being too vague and lacking a real definition and for not containing sufficiently specific objectives, targets and deadlines.

In the contributions there is a clear divide on the correct balance between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the Strategy. One group – notably environmental non-governmental organisations – feels that current EU policy focuses too much on the economic dimension of sustainable development to the detriment of social and environmental objectives and the strategy’s international dimension. Others however, particularly businesses and business organisations, are of the opinion that the economic pillar of the Strategy, which they see as a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development, is not sufficiently developed compared to its environmental and social dimensions.

Most contributions voice concerns about the way the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy complement each other. Many contributions indicate that the two strategies could not be in harmony, while others stress the need to bring them more into line with each other.

As regards the progress made since 2001 on the six priority issues, many policy actions are reviewed. In general, most contributions are not satisfied with the progress made on stopping or curbing the unsustainable trends. On *climate change*, many contributions point to the lack of implementation of what has been decided. There are also concerns with regard to fairness in the treatment of different sectors. On *public health*, opinions diverge as to the progress made. Measures taken to improve food safety are viewed more positively than those related to health policy. A majority of the contributions say that on combating poverty and social exclusion not much progress has been made. On the *ageing society* the largest group of contributors is not satisfied, while many are uncertain about this issue. Active ageing policies are being welcomed, but there are worries about the sustainability of the public pension schemes. Concerning *management of natural resources*, a majority feels that current measures are not sufficient to maintain biodiversity and that the objectives on natural resources are not properly translated into sectoral policies. On *mobility and transport* opinions are divided on the progress made so far.

There are diverging views on the scope of the priority areas. Some want to stick to the current six areas and they emphasize that the priorities are well chosen and do deserve most attention. Others call for the addition of new priorities; the international dimension, in particular, is often mentioned in this respect. A large number of contributions highlight certain aspects of the six priority areas that have so far not received proper attention, for example biodiversity and the protection of natural habitats. This observation was made both by the group that wants to widen the current scope, and by those who do not want to widen it.

In response to the question whether policy making in the European Union is conducive to achieving sustainable development, a majority replied in the negative. Although policies may have contributed to sustainable development, many comments point out that EU-policy making has primarily a sectoral focus. Most contributions have a positive view of the introduction of impact assessments, but they also state that the expectations of impact assessments have not yet been fulfilled. There is support for making additional use of market-based instruments to support sustainable development by internalising external costs. The importance of investments in R&D to promote sustainable development is generally acknowledged. While recognising the steps taken by the Commission, the need to involve civil society and the private sector more in preparation of decision-making is often underlined.

A majority of respondents think that the structural indicators are not sufficient to report on the sustainable development strategy and a large majority thinks that the strategy is not adequately reported on. Several suggestions are made to improve the monitoring and reporting such as new indicators on sustainability and improved communication.

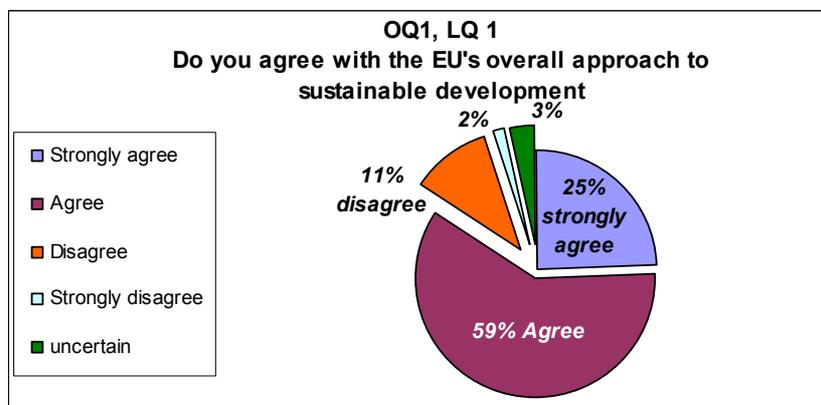
With regard to the international dimension of sustainable development, many state that not enough consideration has been given to the impacts of the EU's internal policies on third countries. The EU's trade and agriculture policies, in particular, need to be better assessed. Many also emphasised that sectors such as fishing and natural resources were not sufficiently considered and that the SDS needed to address the "global footprint" of the EU.

Furthermore, it was argued that the EU's international commitments were not sufficiently reflected in its internal policies, notably sustainable production and consumption, increasing development assistance and global food security. The translation of the EU's international commitments into internal policies should be assured across different policies.

Similarly there is a strong call to pay more attention to the linkage of EU-efforts with actions taken at national or local level. The enlargement creates new challenges and opportunities for the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy and there is a greater need for better coordination.

## II. THE EU'S OVERALL APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY

### 1.1. Consistency with the EU's overall approach to sustainable development<sup>9</sup>



799 replies were received to the first question in both questionnaires concerning the overall approach to the sustainable development of the EU.

The long questionnaire provided the possibility for further comment on the EU's approach (LQ 2). There seems to be a consensus that the European Union must act to ensure sustainable development. Many contributions point out that the challenges to sustainability are as great as they were in 2001. While a majority agrees with the general approach of the EU to sustainability, a considerable minority of contributions disagree. Those that agree with the overall approach say that the Sustainable Development Strategy has the right components. Those that disagree often do not criticise the Strategy as such, but emphasise that it should become more binding, coherent and transparent.

The question on the overall approach prompted different comments on the four basic components of the Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>10</sup>. The broad vision on what is sustainable should not be changed. The importance of a proper balance between social, economic and environmental needs is frequently underlined. This particular point gave rise to many comments. Especially, those who do not agree with the EU's overall approach to sustainability claim that this balance has not been struck. Within this group, some said that the economic interests received too much attention, while others stressed that the environmental concerns had the upper hand.

In reply to the question on the overall approach, many contributions addressed the scope of the six priority areas. Although some argue for increasing the number of areas where immediate action is needed, most contributions stress that the current six priorities were correctly chosen. A number of contributions warn that extending the scope could divert attention from the most urgent problems. (See also the comments in reply to questions 37-40 'beyond the priorities issues')

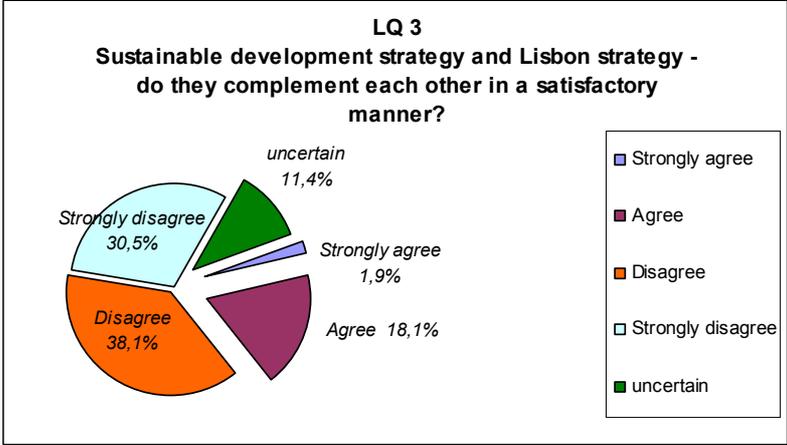
<sup>9</sup> Long questionnaire N° 1 and online questionnaire N° 1

<sup>10</sup> (1) broad vision of what is sustainable, (2) six unsustainable trends – priority areas, (3) policy-making, (4) regular monitoring and reporting

While there is still strong support for the overall approach, many voice their disappointment about the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy so far. Some argue that the strategy lacks clear operational and integrated objectives. The ‘compartmentalisation’ of the Strategy makes it impossible to work on the inter-relationship of different European agenda’s (environmental protection, competitiveness, trade, development, etc.). Others highlight that the strategy lacks delivery mechanisms. In their view this prevents the real integration of sustainable development goals in EU policies and explains why the strategy is not able to stop policies that directly contradict its stated aims.

A number of contributions deal with communication of the content of the strategy. A proper strategy requires good communication. In this context some suggest that the strategy should have paid more attention to education on sustainability. The obvious lack of an international dimension to the strategy is a concern expressed in various contributions.

1.2. *The relationship between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy*<sup>11</sup>



The following questions dealt with the relationship between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy of the EU. 105 replies were given in the long questionnaire. The contributions broadly agree that at present the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy do not complement each other. Many contributions draw attention to the different time horizons in the strategies and the primarily economic focus of the Lisbon Strategy. The background and origins of the two strategies differ as well.

Even though the current situation suggests the contrary, most contributions underline that the two strategies can and should be brought into line with each other. The ‘conceptual tension’ can be bridged. However, opinions differ when it comes to how that should be done. Some emphasize that the Lisbon Strategy should be rewritten in order to become the economic part of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Others argue that the Sustainable Development Strategy should recognise the importance of growth and competitiveness as a precondition for achieving the social and environmental objectives of the Strategy.

Many contributions state that closer alignment between the short-term Lisbon Strategy and the longer-term Sustainable Development Strategy means that objectives should not contradict each other. A considerable number of contributions maintain that the objectives are

<sup>11</sup> Long questionnaire N° 3 and 4.

more or less the same and that there are many overlaps. Examples in the field of social policy are mentioned in this connection. Some even hope that a full merger of the two strategies after 2010 will be possible. Others clearly indicate their opposition to this idea. In these contributions the suggestion is made that the objectives in the two Strategies vary significantly and are sometimes diametrically opposed. In any event, there seems to be a consensus that the review should pay proper attention to the objectives under the two Strategies. If there are tensions between objectives, they must be identified and the review should clarify the choices to be made.

According to a considerable number of contributions the Sustainable Development Strategy should continue to pursue the decoupling of economic growth and the use of resources. These contributions consider that the Lisbon Strategy is not clear enough on this point. Prices should reflect the actual social and environmental costs.

Many contributions say that the Lisbon Strategy can become a ‘delivery mechanism’ for the Sustainable Development Strategy. The Lisbon Strategy has well-defined economic and social targets; hence it is not necessary to have separate goals in these areas in the Sustainable Development Strategy. In their view, ‘Lisbon’ serves as an instrument for sustainable development. Other views have been expressed as well: in order to serve as the economic dimension of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Lisbon Strategy needs, among other things, completely revised indicators. If not - these contributions argue - the Sustainable Development Strategy will be marginalised by the Lisbon Strategy. Other contributions take a less forceful position; they argue that the Lisbon Strategy could carry forward the objectives of the Sustainable Development Strategy if the environmental pillar of the Lisbon Strategy were strengthened. This could be done, for example, in areas like pricing, subsidies and taxation, but also by stimulating eco-innovations.

A number of comments indicate opposition to an ‘instrumental approach’ by the Lisbon Strategy. They emphasize the importance of proper implementation of the current Lisbon Strategy in order to achieve more growth and competitiveness. These contributions seem not very keen on ‘burdening’ the Lisbon Strategy with environmental objectives and stress that the Sustainable Development Strategy can only be pursued if the European Union has a sound economic basis.

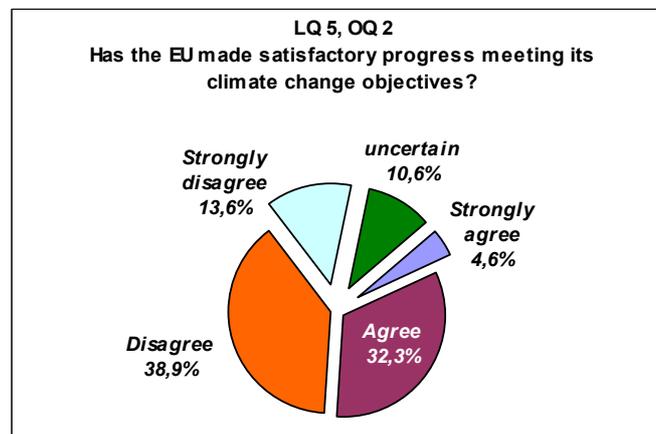
### III. TAKING STOCK OF PROGRESS SINCE 2001 - REVIEWING THE SIX PRIORITY ISSUES – PART A

The Commission is very interested to know how the public views the progress made since 2001 in the areas covered by the Strategy. The public consultation contained two sections to discuss the effects of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Part A looked at the progress made on the six priority issues and Part B at the new approach to policy-making.

The long questionnaire had a brief introduction to reiterate the unsustainable trends identified in 2001. The introduction explained the main objectives to curb these trends and provided a short summary on the main actions that have been taken. Where new evidence regarding the priority issue had become available, these facts were mentioned as well and the introduction also contained links to relevant documents.

#### 1. Climate Change

##### 1.1. Progress since 2001 towards meeting the EU's climate change objectives<sup>12</sup>



Both questionnaires asked whether the public agrees that the EU has made satisfactory progress in recent years towards meeting its climate change objectives. A total of 811 replies were received. All respondents to the online questionnaire answered the question. Many replied as individuals, but in a large number of cases these individuals indicated that they also represent an organisation. It was not possible to make a clear distinction between individuals and organisations in these contributions to the short questionnaire.

The number of contributions to the climate change issue in the long questionnaire was 133. However, 27 did not follow the format of the consultation, so they could not be counted in the statistical overview. Of the total number of contributions to this question, 25 % came from non-governmental organisations, 24 % from public bodies (excluding national governments), and 4.5 % from Member States (national governments), 21 % from business organisations, 7.5 % from companies, 4.5 % from think tanks, 3.5 % from trade unions, 2 % from consumer groups and 8 % from individuals.

<sup>12</sup> Long questionnaire N° 5 and online questionnaire N° 2

A majority of contributions were Europe-based organisations and 34 mentioned the EU as their country of origin. There were 35 contributions from the UK and 22 from Germany. The rest of the contributions came from 19 other countries, including the USA (1) and Norway (1).

A majority of the contributions disagree or disagree strongly that the EU has made satisfactory progress meeting its climate change objectives. They call for more vigorous action and/or different measures. Most of the critical opinions came from non-governmental organisations, business associations, a number of Member States and a large number of public bodies also share these views. However, a sizeable minority of contributions recognises that the EU has made significant strides to improve the situation.

### *1.2. Measures, implementation and new actions<sup>13</sup>*

The public consultation clearly shows that climate change is considered to be one of the most important issues for sustainable development. In general, the contributions accept that the EU has taken important positive steps to combat climate change. However, despite acknowledging the leading role played internationally, many contributions state that the EU has not sufficiently demonstrated that economic growth and emission reductions can go hand in hand. They believe that the promising measures proposed by the Commission, have been too often watered down by Member States (i.e. Emissions Trading System and over-allocation of emission rights). Moreover, the implementation is often lagging behind and the EU has in particular failed to tackle emissions from the transport sector (including land, air and sea transport) and made insufficient progress in developing renewable energy.

This critical view of the progress made is also shared by a large number of business associations and companies, although for different reasons. In their contributions they point out that the EU's forerunner strategy has led to a genuinely global climate change regime, but that the unilateral nature of the EU's actions poses the threat of market distortions and damage to European competitiveness, with insufficient benefits for the environment (e.g. due to carbon leakages). A number of comments also highlight a lack of a cost-effective sharing of targets between countries and sectors such as air transport and the household sector.

Regarding objectives in the area of climate change, many non-governmental organisations believe that the Kyoto commitments are to be seen as the first step. Further action is needed towards controlling emissions to avert climate change above 2°C. In order to reach that objective, emission reductions of 80% by 2050 are required in their view. Some add that the EU should consider intermediate targets for 2025.

Contributions from business organisations draw attention to the rigidity of the National Action Plans adopted under the Emission Trading System for growing sectors. The Trading Systems administrative burden is excessive and creates distortions of electricity prices. It punishes frontrunners and helps laggards. A plea is also made for enhanced cost-predictability by setting realistic targets and making use of Kyoto mechanisms to lower costs. Businesses also emphasize the importance of avoiding legal uncertainty. In this context a number of Member States underline the need to extend and implement the system also in other sectors in the coming years. Some non-governmental organisation and business associations point out that the building sector has a lot of potential for reductions of emissions. A mix of fiscal instruments and regulation could bring progress here. A second European Climate Change

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<sup>13</sup> Long questionnaire N° 6 and 7

Programme must take measures to address the potential in the building sector and other sectors not sufficiently covered so far (like transport and agriculture).

Many contributions, both to the long and the short questionnaire, point out the lack of measures in the transport sector. So far there is too little support for alternative transport modes. The emissions from the current forms of transport must be tackled urgently, for example by fiscal measures to internalise the real costs of transport. Other measures in this sector could include incentives for the use of bio-fuels, compulsory public procurement of clean cars and better land-use planning.

In various contributions, raising awareness on the importance of behavioural change as well as education are mentioned as crucial actions. Obviously, if the public are better informed about climate change, their decisions as consumers will have an impact on emissions. This element was also often mentioned in the short questionnaire.

Regarding priorities for further action, non-governmental organisations would like to see new demand-side measures in the energy sector to increase energy efficiency (i.e. buildings, equipment, automobiles) by means of fiscal reforms, awareness raising, information and education. There seems to be consensus that more should be done to increase the share of renewable energy sources. Contributions from Member States point out that possibilities for energy saving are not exhausted. Businesses stress that energy consultancy pays off. They also see potential for more decentralised power generation. Local authorities emphasize that territorial policies aimed at reducing carbon intensity can be very important. In this context they call for an obligation for power generators to disclose data on energy use. This obligation would allow local authorities to develop evidence-based policies and to monitor their effectiveness.

### *1.3 Direct support and/or price signals to market actors driving technological progress<sup>14</sup>*

Contributions to this question vary in interpretation. Most contributions focus on forms of direct support to renewable energy sources. In this connection, a large number of non-governmental organisations underline the need to create a level playing field between renewable energy sources and other energy carriers. Grid access for renewables must be guaranteed and ensure that energy pricing stimulates long-term security for investors. In the view of NGO's, subsidies to support the use of conventional fuels must be phased out. These measures are necessary to foster the development of renewable energy. In their contributions, local authorities stress that support for renewables should be linked to a strong demand-side policy for energy efficiency through fiscal reforms. The need for a new action programme aimed at improving energy efficiency and strengthening renewable energy policy to achieve the 22 % indicative target by 2010 is highlighted in several contributions. In this respect a number of contributions state that more binding targets for the use of renewable energy for each Member State are necessary. Interestingly, the contributions from a number of Member States also ask for specific targets and related timetables.

A majority of business organisations and industry are not in favour of supporting particular technologies directly. They would rather introduce price signals and leave it to the market to decide which technologies will be applied and used more often. Some contributions add that increased R&D spending and support to bring them to the market are the best way forward to

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<sup>14</sup> Long questionnaire N° 8

promote new technologies. In addition, some call for the removal of barriers to the uptake of new technologies and for simplified access. A couple of non-governmental organisations argue that new technologies could have a better chance to access a market if demonstration projects are being financed or if the purchase of the first models is guaranteed. Among non-governmental organisations there is a positive attitude to subsidies in R&D and in new technologies. ‘Technology Platforms’ should be established. Several local authorities mention public procurement as a tool for encouraging clean technologies.

#### *1.4. Role of non-EU-countries and relations with the EU<sup>15</sup>*

Most contributions state that the EU has a special responsibility in the world. The Union must lead by example and continue to try to involve as many countries as possible. Non-governmental organisations and business associations, both local and national governments of Member States emphasize in their contributions the need for a global consensus on tackling climate change. Member States underline the need to set realistic targets for emissions after 2012. International commitments must be integrated into domestic policies. Industry says that the EU should demonstrate that a move is possible without impacting economic development if other countries do not follow the European approach. Public authorities add that it is important to share best practice and promote clean technologies and common R&D interests worldwide.

#### *1.5 Balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions<sup>16</sup>*

The consultation asked stakeholders whether they think that the actions taken have achieved a satisfactory balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and what short- and long-term trade-offs or synergies they see between actions to address climate change and other domains. Contributions on this question are divided. In general, non-governmental organisations think that too much emphasis has been put on short-term economic considerations. They believe a rebalancing is necessary to account for the long-term economic, social and environmental costs of climate change. Most local authorities seem to have the same view. On the other hand, business organisations and companies state that a balanced approach is not possible as long as other trading partners do not participate in emission reduction efforts.

According to the contributions from businesses, major synergies between economic, social and environmental objectives for climate change are still being achieved in the building sector. Local authorities underline the possibilities of integrated planning for transport, environment and urban development. This will have environmental, economic and social benefits. As mentioned in reply to previous questions, the contributions reiterate the need to include the external costs in transport because it will create synergies with the use of natural resources.

A number of comments state that significant trade-offs exist between developing new transport infrastructure (especially in new Member States) and climate change considerations. Some trade-offs could be better identified and avoided if more and better use was made of impact assessments. This instrument should also take into account consequences such as the

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<sup>15</sup> Long questionnaire N° 9

<sup>16</sup> Long questionnaire N° 10

effects of the Emission Trading System on energy prices or the impact of renewable energy policy on prices for wood as construction material.

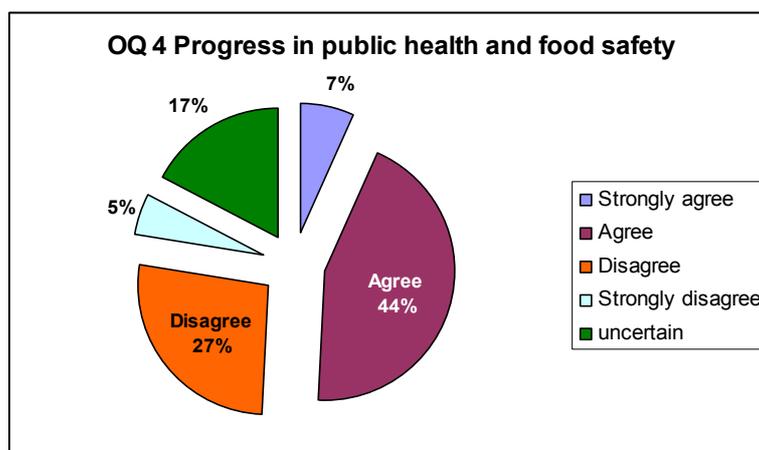
## 2. Public Health

121 contributors replied to at least one, and the majority of contributors to all of the five questions on health that are part of the long questionnaire, and 379 commented on health policy-related questions in the online questionnaire.

While the five health-related questions in the long questionnaire were generally used by organisations, business and institutions, the few individuals who used the long questionnaire did not always reply to these questions. The online questionnaire was the preferred tool of individuals (312 out of 379 contributions) to comment on health and food safety policy. The free format replies in the long questionnaire were far more critical of EU policies such as local (food) production in a global economy, Genetically Modified Organisms, antibiotics, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, organic farming, the REACH-proposals, pesticides, etc...

### 2.1 Progress achieved so far on health and food safety<sup>17</sup>

In the online questionnaire about 44 % of the 692 contributions agreed that the progress in public health and food safety over the past three years has been satisfactory. Some 27 % disagreed. This is a quite different picture to the replies in the long questionnaire.



In the long questionnaire, about 52 % disagree with the statement that the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past years towards meeting its objectives in the field of public health and food safety, while about 23.5 % agree with this statement and 17.5 % are uncertain about this overall judgement. The rest disagree strongly (3.4 %) or agree strongly (3.4 %)<sup>18</sup>.

Disagreement is particularly strong from non-governmental organisations at national and EU level (75 % disagreement). Individual contributions on this question also mainly disagree, but to a lesser extent than environmental organisations and consumer groups.

<sup>17</sup> Long Questionnaire N° 11 and online questionnaire N° 4

<sup>18</sup> Answers such as “disagree on health, agree on food safety” were counted twice, one time as disagreement, a second time as agreement and not as uncertain

Response by business and industry associations is mixed: some can agree, whereas others disagree or are uncertain about this statement. Business associations and companies that cannot agree that progress so far has been satisfactory see an over-emphasis on certain topics (too much focus on policies for reducing emissions to the detriment of other health problems like obesity) as the main weakness of the Sustainable Development Strategy and not, as is the case with non-governmental organisations and consumer groups, the lack of progress or wrong priorities.

Public authorities - many of them at regional level - are split into two camps on the question of overall satisfaction on progress in relation to public health and food safety in the 2001 - 2004 period: some are satisfied, others not. Some experts underline the fact that measures are not translated into indicators or linked to objectives and targets.

Interestingly, the replies to the long questionnaire show that progress at EU level towards sustainability is perceived much more positively on food safety than for health policy. The improvement of food quality with the “farm-to-table approach”, and the establishment of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) are generally perceived as positive achievements. The contributions to the online questionnaire on food safety are less positive and stress the importance of organic agriculture, strict regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and local food production. However, a large majority of contributions to the online questionnaire also see a lot of scope for improvement of the Strategy in this area. In this respect these contributions clearly differ from the majority of contributions to question 11 of the long questionnaire.

When it comes to health policy, few comments show satisfaction with the current situation. Most respondents see scope for improvement e.g. on the environment-health link, and call for better integration and/or new priorities such as lifestyle-related health threats, in particular obesity.

It is worthwhile mentioning that about 50 % of the contributions consider the new regulatory framework for chemicals (REACH)<sup>19</sup> to be the most decisive dossier for EU health policy and for the sustainable development of the EU in general.

## 2.2. *Future actions on health and food safety*<sup>20</sup>

There is general support for measures to maintain and/or improve the level of food safety. All contributions with comments on the issue of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (basically non-governmental organisations, individuals, researchers and public authorities) call for stricter tolerance thresholds, more protection of GMO-free food and feed, as well as a better framework for co-existence and/or traceability. Many replies to the online questionnaire likewise support further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and food production and processing methods.

Health policy is generally considered to be a crucial element of a European sustainable development policy. Only a few contributions question EU competence in the field of health policy. However, a large majority of respondents are convinced that the public health objectives need to be updated in order to better reflect the wide range of health determinants,

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<sup>19</sup> COM(2003)644 - The new EU regulatory framework for chemicals. The proposed new system is called REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals)

<sup>20</sup> Long questionnaire N° 12 and 13

including new threats such as lifestyle-related diseases (obesity and nutrition, in particular, were mentioned repeatedly).

Many statements signal that the current headline objectives do not properly tackle all issues relevant for sustainable development. A significant number of contributions would like more action (including research) on the interaction between environment and health issues (chronic diseases, chemicals, pollution).

More than half of the contributions in reply to the questions on public health also comment on the new regulatory framework for chemicals (REACH). Many contributions refer to it as a litmus test for a balanced three-pillar approach and as a showcase for sustainable development. One group of contributions fear that the proposal might be jeopardized by business lobbying. A significant number of these contributions state that the originally more ambitious proposal better reflected the principle of sustainable development, especially on the substitution of certain substances. However, other contributions warn against over-emotional reactions in the absence of proper scientific studies. They are worried about the costs involved and stress the importance of having an effective and workable system in place.

A number of respondents call for a stronger focus on children when it comes to EU health policy, since health threats tend to fall disproportionately on children. According to these contributions this aspect is not properly reflected in policy making. Some contributors, especially local public authorities, see poorer people as a target group to show how health policy and social policy goals can be mutually reinforcing. In particular in this context, (nutritional) education is considered to be crucial for achieving health policy goals, also in view of new health threats such as obesity. Healthy ageing is mentioned by some respondents as another important topic.

### 2.3. *The Sustainable Development Strategy and non-EU countries*<sup>21</sup>

The vast majority of contributions are convinced that health threats are cross-border issues. Action within the EU is vital, but is not in itself sufficient to guarantee the health of EU citizens in a global economy. Threats such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and avian flu were several times quoted as examples. Co-operation and action with and within the World Health Organisation was cited by a number of organisations and individuals. Many contributions see a proactive role for the EU when it comes to encouraging best practices and assisting less developed countries to improve sanitary, environmental and health standards. It is recognised that it is difficult to impose standards on non-EU countries, but that despite this the EU should serve as a good and encouraging example. A small number of people consider import regulations as a tool.

### 2.4 *Balance between the economic, social and environmental dimension*<sup>22</sup>

An overwhelming majority of contributors is convinced that, so far, a satisfactory balance has not been achieved between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of public health strategy, irrespective of whether they are convinced that the right priorities have been chosen.

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<sup>21</sup> Long questionnaire N° 14

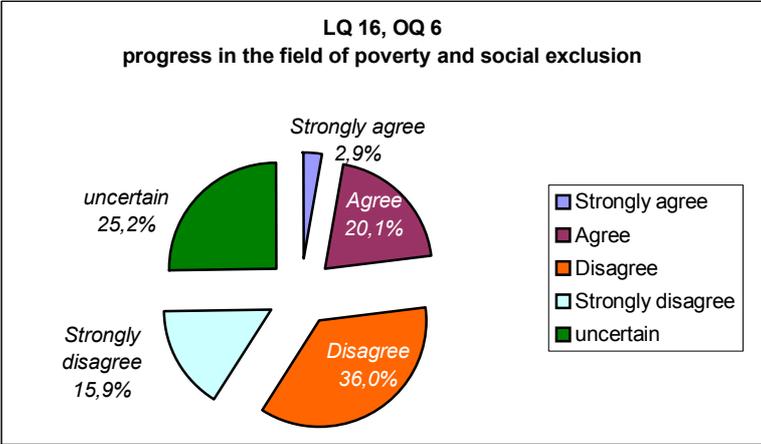
<sup>22</sup> Long questionnaire N° 15

There is a general acknowledgement of important theoretical synergies between environment and health (“what is good for the environment is also good for human health”)<sup>23</sup>, both for health and for poverty/social exclusion. However, respondents are also convinced that these synergies are not yet being put into practice. Many feel that a holistic approach to health policy is still lacking. Some contributions underline the difficulties in assessing long-term benefits of health policy measures. A number of replies cite the transport sector, with its impact on physical inactivity, air quality, obesity, land use and road safety, as an example of the failure of policy integration at the frontier between health and environmental policy.

### 3. Poverty and Social Exclusion

#### 3.1 Progress in the field of poverty, employment, education and social exclusion<sup>24</sup>

Both the long and the online questionnaires ask whether the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its policy objectives in the fields of poverty, employment, education and social exclusion.



In total, 762 responses were given to this question. More than 50 % of all contributions disagree or strongly disagree that there has been progress in recent years. Only 23 % agree or strongly agree. One quarter of all contributions state that they are uncertain about the progress made. It should be noted that nearly half of contributions to the long questionnaire did not answer this part of the public consultation.

#### 3.2 Objectives, Measures and implementation<sup>25</sup>

Most contributions state that the objectives set at EU level are appropriate. In general, contributions applaud the EU strategies in place, but they also call for a better implementation of these policies. Especially contributions from business organisations and industry stress that implementation has to improve. These organisations also argue in favour of gradual change and wish to see stronger incentives to work. Public support should stimulate the development of individual responsibility. Also non-governmental organisations and local authorities criticise the lack of implementation of relevant policies and measures to attain the objectives

<sup>23</sup> An interesting minority opinion saw short-term tradeoffs between controlling diseases and environmental hazards e.g. with medication and animal medication  
<sup>24</sup> Long questionnaire N° 16, online questionnaire N° 6  
<sup>25</sup> Long questionnaire N° 17

on poverty and social exclusion. A significant proportion of the public feels that the EU pays too little attention to alleviating poverty in its internal and external policies. Some suggest that the EU only pays lip service to combating poverty, but real action is lacking. This point of view is taken especially by non-governmental organisations and individuals.

A number of contributions call for more social convergence, even social harmonisation. Contributions from business associations and companies state that corporate social responsibility should be further developed. Local public authorities point out that companies should respect fundamental social rights.

Better integration of immigrants is also a recurring theme. The EU needs more resources to deal with immigration policy, in particular as far as access to the EU, social integration and employment participation of immigrants are concerned.

A number of contributions draw attention to the Member States which joined the EU in 2004. Given the social situation in these Member States, the contributions make a plea for equal access to quality services – in particular education, health, housing. Others emphasise the need to respect the diversity between Member States and the need to focus on national action plans.

Opinions differ as to why progress has been slow. Approximately half of the contributions say that the EU's actions do not sufficiently contribute to enhancing Europe's competitiveness. These policies add extra costs for companies both in terms of labour and of social security.

Other contributions argue that the Union's action is not sufficiently committed to the fight against social exclusion. These comments stress that the concentration on an agenda for competitiveness and liberalisation harms the European social model. A significant number of contributions see the EU as an agent of (neo)-liberal policies, which erode the European social model.

### 3.3. *Actions to be taken in the next five years*<sup>26</sup>

The public consultation reveals a wide range of opinions with regard to new actions to reduce poverty and social exclusion. This question on action to be taken in the coming years was raised in both the online and long questionnaires.

Many contributions draw attention to the importance of employment and education as instruments to fight poverty and social exclusion. As to employment, the focus is on minimum wages, taxation, and better overall working conditions. Young people were singled out as a target group which deserves more attention, both to step up educational achievement and to facilitate access to the labour market.

Strong emphasis is placed on the local dimension. Fighting poverty and supporting social cohesion starts at the local level. Many believe that the public authorities have a key role to play in addressing poverty. Providing the appropriate financial resources is important in this respect. However, encouraging people to develop their own capacity is also advocated.

Some contributions mention taxation policy as a major instrument in the fight against poverty. Some argue that taxes on low incomes should be reduced. This is seen as particularly helpful

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<sup>26</sup> Long questionnaire N° 18 and online questionnaire N° 7

in creating jobs which pay a decent net wage. Taxation should therefore be shifted to other sources, such as capital, raw materials, energy, luxury goods or consumption in general. At the same time, the redistribution system should be refined to reduce inequalities in income. A fiscal system that favours employment should be pursued.

Some references are also made which concern consumer protection, for instance through a stricter regulation of credit card schemes or tighter regulation of the advertising industry.

### 3.4 *International dimension and balance between the three dimensions, trade-offs and synergies with other policy areas*<sup>27</sup>

The last two questions in the long questionnaire on “poverty and social exclusion” referred to the EU’s external policies in this field and the role of non-EU countries in this respect. It was also asked whether the actions taken achieved a satisfactory balance between the three pillars of sustainable development and the trade-offs and synergies with other policy areas.

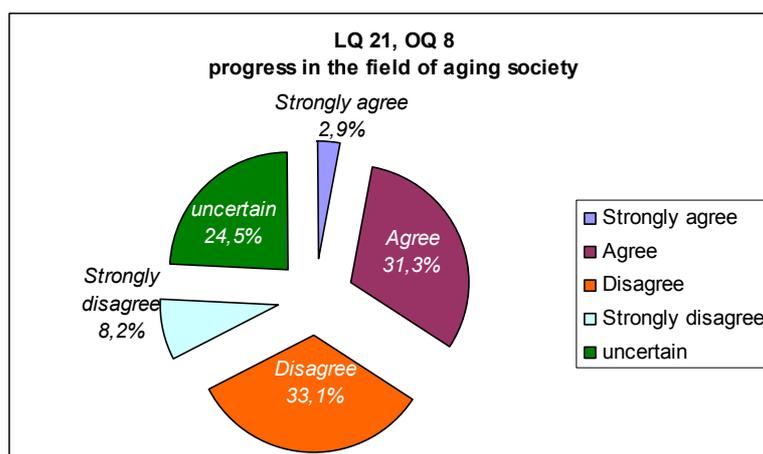
The number of replies to this question was relatively small. Most contributions state that social considerations should not be taken into account when dealing with trade issues or the international aspects of policies. These comments suggest that social considerations could easily be used as protectionist barriers. Others argue that the EU should be more active in fighting poverty in the world. In this connection some emphasize the importance of combating social dumping.

The views on the correct balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in this field vary sharply. The diverging opinions show the same pattern as on other issues. On the one hand, one group of contributions emphasizes the need for the EU to improve its competitiveness, as without a strong economy and stable growth the European social model will become too expensive. Other contributions stress that current social and economic policies are already unbalanced because the economic dimension receives too much attention, to the detriment of the social dimension.

## 4. **Ageing Society**

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<sup>27</sup> Long questionnaire N° 19 - 20



752 stakeholders answered the question as to whether progress has been achieved in the field of ageing society over the last three years<sup>28</sup>. Similarly, in answer to the question concerning “poverty and social exclusion” the biggest group of contributions (41.3 % of the total) disagrees with the view that there has been progress on the issue of ageing society), although the level of disagreement on this question is lower than on the subject of “poverty and social exclusion”, where 52% disagreed. A large proportion of contributions (24.5 %) were not sure. It has to be pointed out that only about half of the contributions to the long questionnaire reacted to these aspects of the social dimension in the Sustainable Development Strategy. When taken together with the remarkable number of “uncertain” replies, the conclusion could be drawn that public interest and/or awareness concerning the social pillar in the Sustainable Development Strategy is not particularly strong.

#### 4.1. Objectives, measures and implementation<sup>29</sup>

Asked to explain their opinions expressed in the closed questions and to give their opinion about whether the objectives in the field of ageing society need to be updated, most contributions state that the objectives set at EU level are appropriate. However, they criticise the lack of implementation of appropriate policies and measures to attain these objectives. Most welcome the emphasis put on active ageing policies. However, while some only look at the extension of working life and worry about the lack of sustainability of public pension schemes, others point out that an appropriate public pension system is a fundamental part of an active ageing policy.

#### 4.2. Financial sustainability of pension systems and role of immigration<sup>30</sup>

Here again, the contributions contain different views. Most contributions call for a combination of raising the participation rate and/or retirement age, phasing in retirement, adjusting annual payouts, broadening the tax base, supplementing by private pension systems etc. Another group underlines above all the need for financial sustainability of public schemes. According to this view an increase in private pensions is crucial. Others insist on the importance of social adequacy and adaptation to changing working patterns.

<sup>28</sup> Long questionnaire N° 21, online questionnaire N° 8

<sup>29</sup> Long questionnaire N° 22 - 23

<sup>30</sup> Long questionnaire N° 24 - 25

The majority of the contributions agree on the importance of migration to compensate for the ageing EU population. In this context, some stress the need for fair treatment of migrants.

#### 4.3. *Balance between the three dimensions, trade-offs and synergies*<sup>31</sup>

The same pattern of varying opinions is apparent on this question. For some, more emphasis ought to be put on competitiveness, while for others the EU's action is unbalanced, as it does not take proper account of the social dimension. The differences between these two large groups of opinions are evident.

#### 4.4. *Actions in the next five years*<sup>32</sup>

A rich variety of responses was given to the questions on ageing. There is a general recognition that demographic ageing is a key issue and that Europe should address it.

A common pattern can be observed on the employment question. Specific attention should be paid to young people entering the labour market. Keeping older people in work is still perceived by a majority of contributions as a policy which creates youth unemployment. A strong emphasis is placed by many on individual choice with regard to retirement. Others favour the total number of years of work and working conditions in a particular job being the determining factor in deciding on the retirement age and the pension conditions for each individual person.

However, academic institutes, business organisations and several individuals argue in favour of capitalising on the experience of older workers. They can act as tutors for young workers, providing input and feedback to improve performance.

Economic immigration is seen by many as a way to address Europe's ageing society. However, policies that provide incentives for couples to have children and to have an 'extended' family are also put forward: housing, better working conditions, free child care and parental leave are quoted as important elements in this respect.

Another common pattern could be detected around the issue of health care. Healthy lifestyles should be encouraged. Health care systems should be modernised: quality and access are key concerns here. Others emphasise the importance of the financial sustainability of the health care systems. Overall, there is a broad consensus that the EU can play an important role here, including through the exchange of good practices.

Lifelong learning and preventative policies are advanced as important issues for active ageing. Many also emphasise the need to reconcile professional and family life.

## 5. **Management of Natural Resources**

On this unsustainable trend, identified in the Sustainable Development Strategy, there were five questions in the long questionnaire and two questions in the online questionnaire<sup>33</sup>.

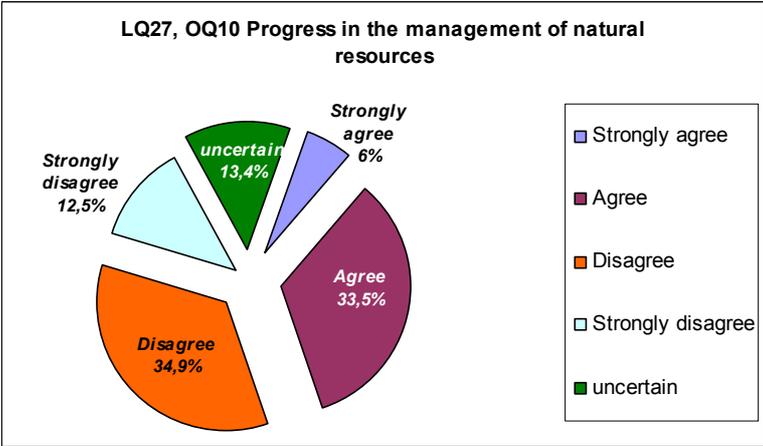
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<sup>31</sup> Long questionnaire N° 26

<sup>32</sup> Online questionnaire N° 9

<sup>33</sup> Long questionnaire N° 27 - 31, online questionnaire N° 10 - 11

It is interesting to see that the contributions in general were very much in line with the outcome of the Malahide Conference on biodiversity and with the underlying analysis that will be used in the new EU natural resources policy. As regards the Integrated Product Policy (IPP) and the policy approach to waste, the contributions did not contain many fresh insights.



The question on the progress made by the EU in recent years towards meeting its objectives related to the management of natural resources was raised in both questionnaires. In reply to this question, there were 128 contributions to the long questionnaire and 692 contributions to the short questionnaire.

All in all, the largest group of contributions state that they are not content with the progress achieved in meeting the objectives on the management of natural resources in the last three years (disagree/strongly disagree: 47.4 %). Contributions to the long questionnaire – mostly organisations, but also a few individuals – are more negative than the reactions to the online questionnaire. The contributions to the online questionnaire are almost in balance as regards the progress made since 2001.

The more negative reactions to this question in the long questionnaire come from non-governmental organisations, public bodies and academic institutions, but also from business-related organisations. Quite a large number of non-governmental organisations gave very similar replies to these questions (the same wording was used). One Member State stresses the need to establish a “framework for developing a programme on SPC at EU level to fulfil commitments from the World Summit on Sustainable Development”. Another Member State, on the subject of resource use, underlines the need to concentrate efforts on production and consumption patterns. All Member States share the same concerns in the field of biodiversity.

The contributions which replied “agree” to this question in the long questionnaire came from business-related organisations or companies.

5.1. *Need for updating the objectives – explanations of opinions*<sup>34</sup>

The next question in the long questionnaire gave those that replied negatively to the previous question room to explain. The public was also asked if it thought that the objectives needed updating. In the contributions most attention is paid to biodiversity, resource use, land use and

<sup>34</sup> Long questionnaire N° 28

soil, and Integrated Product Policy. On “Biodiversity” many contributions emphasize keeping the 2010 biodiversity target at all costs. For this, the political commitment needs to be stronger. Moreover, policies in a wide range of areas have to be more coherent.

A specific need for action is seen in the field of fisheries policies and the marine strategies of the European Union. Measures to restore depleted fish stocks and protect vulnerable marine species and habitats are essential according to many contributions. A Maritime Strategy which takes into account the flexible ecosystems is mentioned. Others point to the financial measures to support fishermen and industries in coastal zones and to measures to develop aquaculture with very high environmental standards to provide healthy seafood for the market.

Concerning the EU’s agricultural policy a further reform should reward healthy, environment-friendly products of high quality. A number of contributions criticise the fact that today 90 % of the funds are allocated to unsustainable farming practices. Future actions for rural development should consider biodiversity as a key issue. Some stress that the EU tobacco policy also needs an impact assessment.

Several opinions address transport policies and their relationship to the destruction and degradation of habitats. The review of the Sustainable Development Strategy should be used as an opportunity to create a link to the Forest Strategy.

With respect to “resource use” most contributions state that, while intentions on the political level are good, implementation of policies is poor. Measures are insufficient and take too much time. Lack of targets and timeframes hinder real evaluation of progress. Also the integration of natural resources issues into sectoral policies is either insufficient or totally absent.

Many contributions state that the urgency of the problem of “land use and the loss of fertile soil” is not properly covered in the present Sustainable Development Strategy. Binding targets on reduction of land use and measures for the protection and improvement of soil are needed and the EU should finalise the planned Strategy on Soil. Special attention and activities should target the urban regions in the Union.

Opinions are divided on whether Integrated Product Policy has made a contribution to improve the situation in the management of resource use. Some state that it is too early to judge and some say it has not been successful so far. Others contend that it has no clear concept. Member States in particular argue that its implementation needs to be intensified, as do several regional authorities, who also argue that it needs concrete objectives and timetables and has to be more than just voluntary measures undertaken by business.

## 5.2. *Measures undertaken, implementation and actions for the next five years*<sup>35</sup>

The answers on this question partially overlap with the previous question.

The main focus is again on biodiversity, use of resources, land use and also water and waste.

Concerning “biodiversity” generally, replies expressed the opinion that measures are going in the right direction but that they are insufficient. Biodiversity concerns have to be implemented

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<sup>35</sup> Long questionnaire N° 29, online questionnaire N° 11

in horizontal legislation and all policy areas, in particular the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the cohesion policy, transport, trade, development, research. Strong support is given to the demand that biodiversity as a structural indicator has to be adopted (see also chapter “Monitoring and reporting”). The letters from UK-based citizens state that there is no actual measure of biodiversity itself. In their view, one of the main objectives of a Sustainable Development Strategy should be halting the loss of biodiversity. Several member states, non-governmental organisations and regional bodies address the importance of adequate financing for the programme “Natura 2000”. Non-governmental organisations point out that the programme should be extended. Several references were made with respect to fostering biological agriculture.

Several measures were mentioned referring to the “use of resources”. There seems to be strong support for a “resources strategy” with concrete targets, indicators and monitoring requirements. Financial and fiscal measures and the shifting of taxes from labour to the use of resources were also mentioned in several contributions.

Some suggestions were made for actions concerning “land use/soil”. The development of indicators for land use was also mentioned as well as taxes or other market-based and financial instruments to reduce land use and soil sealing.

Several contributions note the absence of “water” as a priority in the Sustainable Development Strategy. The strategy has to be consistent with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) of the EU, avoiding eutrophication and siltation impacts on water-related habitats, and maximising the resilience of catchments to undesirable flooding events and to water shortage. The privatisation and liberalisation policy of the EU was questioned by a number of respondents and the integrative approach of Directive 60/2000 defining water bodies as ecological systems and aiming at a ‘true costs’ approach was welcomed. Effective protection of natural habitats and biodiversity was voiced repeatedly; particular emphasis should be given to marine habitats.

In general, a vast majority of those commenting on “waste” policy were positive about what had been done in the reference period and asked for this to continue. But a number of contributions from various backgrounds note that waste generation is still rising and point out that this trend indicate a problem. Some contributions also note that it is too early to judge for the most recent wave of waste legislation. There appears to be a consensus among non-governmental organisations that recycling should be further developed. A few contributions mention re-use as well. In this connection business organisations point out that market for recycled products should be further developed. Several local and national governments address minimum standards for treatment centres. Producer responsibility was identified as being important. In addition programmes of public awareness and education in sustainable development were called for and the responsibility of religious communities to raise ethical awareness to the inner values and the definition of lifestyle and wealth-perception to change behaviour of consumers and decision makers in society and politics were also mentioned. The elimination of direct and indirect public subsidies for unsustainable productions and products was another action noted.

### 5.3. *International dimension of natural resources and non-EU country policies*<sup>36</sup>

A very large majority of contributions state that, in general, EU policies do not take into account the international dimension of natural resources. Many non-governmental organisations underline that the Union does not have an effective mechanism to ensure that the international dimension is properly reflected in the policy choices made. In their view this leads to shift of environmental burdens to developing countries.

Many contributions claim that EU trade policy is not committed enough to promote sustainable fair trade. The EU could voice stronger criticism against social injustice in the Third World. The ‘footprint’ of the EU in third countries remains large. A consumer organisation and a company mention the EU’s fisheries policy as an example of an unsustainable practice. Similarly, more should be done in agriculture. Agricultural tariffs in the EU limit the economic growth of developing countries. Non Governmental Organisations stress that biodiversity is not mentioned in the EU Commodities Action Plan.

Several Contributions stress the importance of working on sustainable forest management. Agreement in the EU on a regulation to implement a voluntary timber licensing scheme is essential, but further action is needed as well. The EU must use its influence in international (UN) fora to take forward new measures. Some business organisations point out that the EU should not place too many restrictions on wood in general, because nearly all the wood used in the pulp and paper industry comes from EU-countries.

### 5.4. *Balance between the three dimensions, trade-offs and synergies*<sup>37</sup>

Contributions point out that the EU does not do enough to strike a satisfactory balance between the economic, environmental and social dimensions. Most contributions, especially from non-governmental organisations, are of the opinion that the environmental pillar does not get proper attention.

Many contributions underscore that the EU-mechanism to assess costs and benefits typically overstates the short-term benefits and underestimates the long-term costs. In particular, the economic side and the importance attached to competitiveness overshadow the environmental and social aspects of development. EU policies do not properly reflect the real price of goods and services. Contributions cite various examples to illustrate the ‘imbalance’.

A number of contributions refer to synergies between the three pillars of the Strategy. The general observation is made that sound economic growth does not have to contradict sustainable development. A Member State gives the example of a thematic policy on land use planning. This policy can be fully compatible with the various pillars of the Strategy. A non-governmental organisation says that economic growth is necessary to improve social conditions and good environmental quality is also a social issue. Similarly, a public authority points out that economic development and improved environmental quality can go hand in hand. It warns that a fixation on lower costs is often a form of short-term thinking.

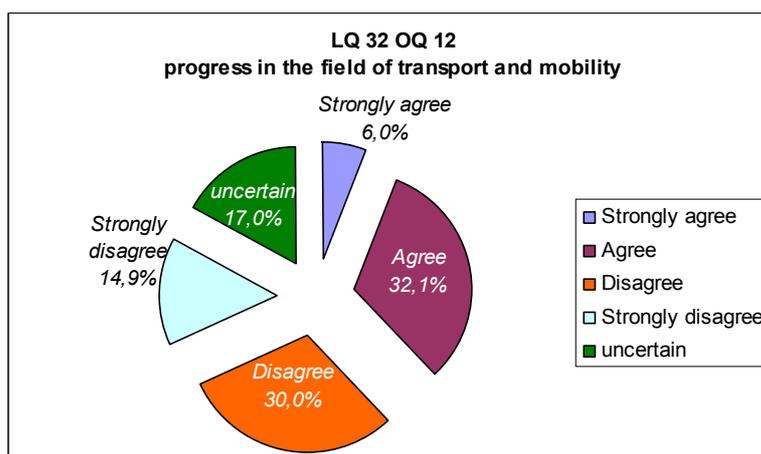
## 6. **Mobility and Transport**

### 6.1. *Progress in the field of transport and mobility*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Long questionnaire N° 30

<sup>37</sup> Long questionnaire N° 31



In total 789 replies were given in the long and online questionnaires to the question of whether the EU has made satisfactory progress over the past three years towards meeting its objectives related to transport and mobility.

The largest group of 45 % do not agree that the objectives have been achieved. 17 % of the contributions are uncertain. But a large proportion - 38.1 % - agrees or strongly agrees that the objectives have been achieved.

The picture is quite different if one looks at the replies to the long questionnaire only.

91 answers were given to question 32 in the long questionnaire. Only 11 % of the contributions noted progress in the sustainability of transport and mobility in recent years and 78 % believe that the situation has deteriorated.

<b><u>Distribution of groups</u></b>					
	<b>Business</b>	<b>Public Bodies</b>	<b>Member States</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Individual</b>
<b>Agree</b>	5	5	1		
<b>Uncertain</b>	4	2		2	1
<b>Disagree</b>	14	9	3	8	3
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3	4		26	1
<b>Total</b>	26	20	4	36	5

In all groups the majority sees no progress, but it should be recognised that also five business organisations, public bodies and at least one Member State believe there has been some progress in recent years.

<sup>38</sup> Long questionnaire N° 32, online questionnaire N° 12

## 6.2. *Review of objectives in the next strategy*<sup>39</sup>

Most contributions suggest that the objectives have to be updated. Only some state that the current objectives are satisfactory. Some point out that there has been a positive trend in road transport safety and the decrease of pollutants (a 24 - 35 % reduction in pollutants due to improved technical standards).

The main negative opinions note that environmental impacts due to transport have increased at the same time as transport volume. There are no signs of a significant decoupling of the environmental impacts of transport growth and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, and modal shift has not happened sufficiently.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions from transport are rising continuously. Induced effects on transport of Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) projects or other projects financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) are not adequately measured, and the efforts to internalise external costs have so far failed.

The European Commission has spent significant amounts of money from its research budgets on pilot projects for smarter and cleaner transport. However, the need is for more practical projects to implement this knowledge in actual applications.

Some actions and objectives were proposed, such as lifestyle change, kerosene tax and other tax instruments, internalisation of social and environmental costs, general harmonisation in the Member States (Taxes, Legislation etc.). Clean and cheaper public transport as well as education and information would help to develop sustainable transport and also technical and infrastructure development.

## 6.3. *Assessment of measures in the past – actions in future*<sup>40</sup>

A large majority of the contributions suggest that the measures in this field have not been implemented, that there is no progress or that any progress has been very slow. The actions proposed are similar to the replies to the previous question, but with some new comments added.

In general, most contributions seem convinced that a modal shift from road to (preferably) rail and water transportation is necessary. Therefore, it is crucial that rail development and improvement are stimulated. Moreover, transport must become cleaner and several actions to that end are suggested. Many of the contributions want to stimulate the use of low- emissions technology. If implemented, this will reduce part of the environmental impact of transport and mobility. Not only private vehicles but especially public transport should become much cleaner through rigorous implementation of new, low-emissions technologies. For example, the promotion of bio-fuels and clean fuel would help sustainability.

A large number of contributions propose forms of specific taxation. Aviation taxes and additional fuel taxes are often mentioned in this context. In this way, the real environmental and social cost can be internalised in the overall transport costs.

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<sup>39</sup> Long questionnaire N° 33

<sup>40</sup> Long questionnaire N° 34 and online questionnaire N° 13

Contributions, especially from local governments, highlight the need for action at local and regional level. One of the elements mentioned in this respect is the promotion of consumption of local products and services in order to avoid long-distance transport. Some draw attention to congestion charging zones, aimed at reducing traffic volume in urban areas. Some answers have proposed control of car use for professional purposes, as well as actions to increase teleworking, video conferences etc. Cheaper public transport, development and promotion of cycle lanes and bike use, more education, information and education, research into new solutions for large cities are other suggestions which appear in many of the answers. In general, technology and infrastructure development is necessary to improve the transport and mobility policy. Finally, stricter and more effective legislation is called for.

In relation to infrastructure charging, respondents recommend replacing existing directives by a framework directive which adopts a consistent approach to all modes of transport, including all external costs and making available information on the real internalised costs of transport.

With regard to Trans-European Network for Transport (TENs), contributions state that a cost-benefit analysis should be introduced in addition to strengthening environmental impact assessments of TENs. It should be carried out as early as the planning stage, before the EU funding decision, paying greater attention to the protection of natural habitats and biodiversity and better consideration of alternatives including use and improvement of existing networks. Transport subsidies to road and aviation must end.

Few non-governmental organisations believe that the measures taken go in the right direction, or that there has been sufficient progress in charging of transport, for instance, which has to be improved so that the price reflects the external cost to society, in particular for road and air. The same goes for emissions from non-road mobile sources, from which the Commission omitted engines for locomotives; non-governmental organisations propose that these should be added by the Council and the European Parliament.

A majority of business organisations agree that there are some measures that should be taken into consideration to make European transport and mobility policy more sustainable. A majority of the public bodies and Member States considers that many measures need to be taken in order to make good progress in the next five years.

#### 6.4. *International dimension of transport policy*<sup>41</sup>

The general opinion is that the international dimension is relevant to the field of mobility and transport, but at the moment it is not covered in EU policies. Political actions are proposed in areas like internalisation of environmental and social costs, harmonisation of legislation between Member States, clean transport, modal shift, bio-fuel and emissions from growing air transport.

The ACEA-agreement<sup>42</sup> is often quoted as a good example of international action.

A few business organisations note that attention to the international dimension has evolved positively, but that there is a risk of delocalisation. Also Member States have a positive opinion about the international dimension and on the progress made in emissions reduction.

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<sup>41</sup> Long questionnaire N° 35

<sup>42</sup> Voluntary agreement between the European Commission and the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) which aims at reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from passenger cars

However, they propose additional action to further increase leadership (i.e. ACEA-agreement).

6.5. *Balance between the three pillars, trade-offs or synergies to other areas*<sup>43</sup>

Most of the contributions say that there has not been a satisfactory balance and that environment and health have not been taken into account sufficiently. Also the social dimension in transport should have more importance in the future than it has had so far.

According to many of the non-governmental organisations the balance is clearly unsatisfactory, and not even the economy is served with the current policies.

Conversely, some business organisations state that the balance is fine. However, other business representatives say that there is not a good balance yet and they propose actions to reach this objective.

Local governments state that the balance between the policies is not satisfactory. In their view there is a fundamental conflict between the necessary new approach to transport and the principles of the internal market (free flow of goods).

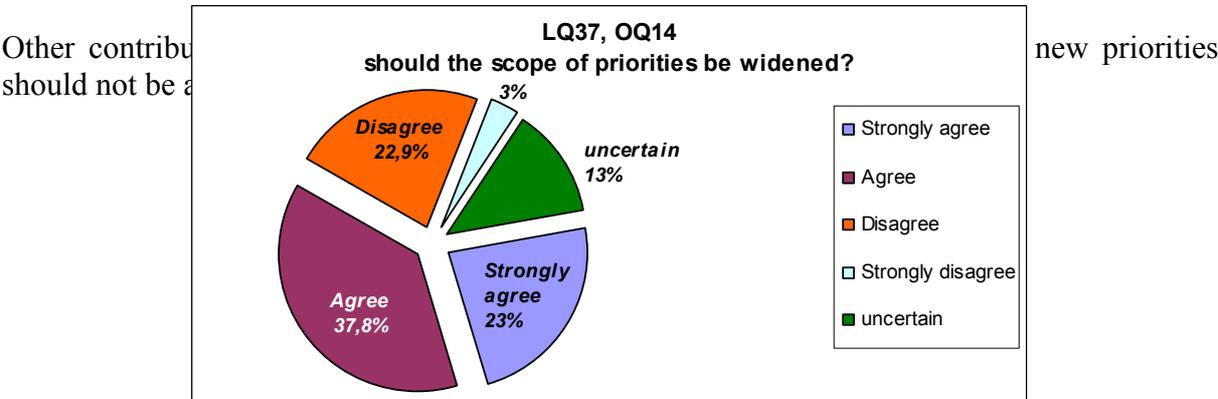
A number of Member States point to proposals for actions to limit the environmental damage of the different modes of transport (road, aviation, TENS), and they underline the need for a comprehensive approach to transport, including the social dimension.

Some individual contributions agree that the measures taken to reduce emissions were successful, but say that there is a problem with the USA as it is the biggest producer of emissions and is not willing to cut its emissions.

7. **Beyond the Priority Issues**

7.1. *Scope of the strategy*<sup>44</sup>

802 replies were given to the question on whether the scope of the strategy should be widened by including additional priority issues in both questionnaires. A large group of 61 % support the opinion that the scope of the Strategy should be widened and make suggestions for broadening the current priority areas.



<sup>43</sup> Long questionnaire N° 36

This group stresses that widening the scope would divert attention from the current priority areas. They emphasize that these priority areas were deliberately chosen. The serious and potentially irreversible trends need urgent action now. Often the point is added that not enough has been done since 2001. Moreover, the six priorities by themselves already cover a wide range of issues. Within the current scope nearly all necessary actions can be addressed.

The majority see room for enlarging the scope of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Many of these contributions mention the international dimension. The Strategy should have a specific section on how the EU fulfils its international commitments. Furthermore, within the current priority issues the external aspects should receive more attention. In this way coherence in EU-policies would increase. Another area which is often mentioned is education. Young people especially should be aware of the importance of sustainability. Greater awareness and communication would have positive effects on attaining the Strategy's objectives.

A large number of contributions highlight certain aspects of the six priority areas that apparently have not yet received appropriate attention. This observation was made both by the group that wants to widen the current scope and by those who do not want it widened.

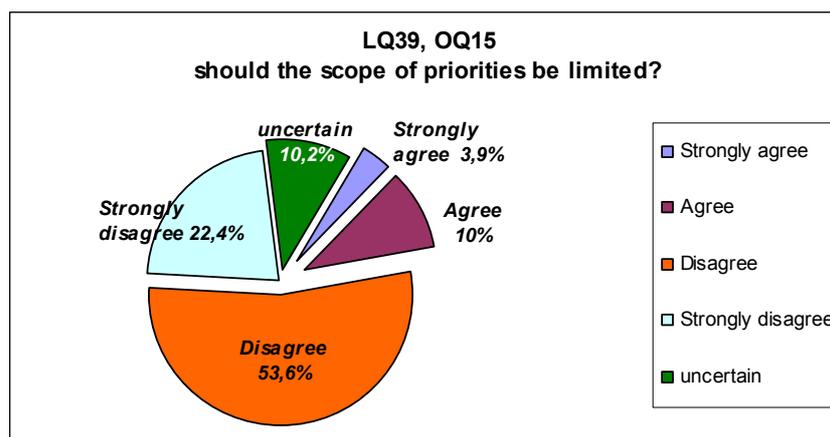
A number of contributions call for a sharper focus on economic sustainability. These contributions argue that more should be done to strengthen European industry and innovation. Policies should be checked for their impact on international competitiveness. Other contributions highlight the social priorities. The fight against poverty, the quality of labour and the importance of sustainable labour costs in Europe are mentioned. Another example is the request for specific concentration on energy, because it is a cross-cutting theme relevant to a sustainable economy and to the environment.

Many contributions underscore the importance of biodiversity and protection of habitats as specific priorities. They feel that these aspects are not covered well enough in the priority area 'management of natural resources'.

Some contributions draw attention to production and consumption patterns. The Strategy should be geared towards changing these patterns. For sustainable development it will not be enough to curb the dangerous trends in the six priority areas alone. In many cases this point is linked to the need for more, coherent (international) action, given the very nature of modern production and consumption patterns.

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<sup>44</sup> Long questionnaire N° 37 - 40, online questionnaire N° 14 - 15



The answer to the question whether the scope of the strategy should be limited<sup>45</sup> is clear: the overwhelming majority disagrees with limiting the scope. (76 % of 787 replies)

Not many additional comments or reasons are given for this reply<sup>46</sup>. Some contributions simply state that the current six priority areas are absolutely essential for sustainable development. Keep the current scope, but bring more focus in the priority areas is another comment.

Only a few contributions (14 %) react positively to this question. These state that ‘mobility and transport’ is not a priority because it is covered by the other identified issues.

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<sup>45</sup> Long questionnaire N° 39, online questionnaire N° 15

<sup>46</sup> Long questionnaire N° 40

## IV. CHANGING THE WAY WE MAKE POLICIES – PART B

Most unsustainable trends and priority issues are characterised by complex interactions between sectors, conflicts between long-term gain and short-term costs, and the difficulty of markets to deliver a solution. This is why the EU Sustainable Development Strategy also called for changes in the way policy is made and implemented, including the need to make trade-offs between conflicting objectives and interests explicit.

The Commission's consultation sought the public's opinion on whether its objectives have been achieved and progress has been made. Where the public thought this was not the case, the Commission asked for advice and suggestions on how to do things better.

### 1. Improving Policy Coherence

#### 1.1. *Contribution of EU policies to sustainable development*<sup>47</sup>

Many contributions are not satisfied with the progress made. A number of contributions recognize that EU policies have contributed in some degree to sustainability. Many emphasize that progress has been slow or non-existent, and in some cases the situation has even deteriorated.

Although policies may have contributed to sustainable development, many comments highlight the view that EU-policy making has primarily a sectoral focus. Many contributions do not seem to be convinced that the Commission has really developed a new way of policy making. Contributions often draw attention to the 'independent' Directorates-General and stress the need for real internal cooperation to bring forward sustainability.

A number of contributions mention the lack of coherence between the institutions of the Union and the imbalance in coordination between the Union and the Member States. Various contributions criticise the role of the Council and press for a new political impetus for the Cardiff process. Some contributions draw attention to the Member States' poor record on implementing environmental directives. Without strong coordination – which is essential for sustainable development, given its very nature – EU policies are likely to reflect the lowest common denominator of the different players in the decision-making process.

In order to achieve sustainable outcomes, it is often necessary to work on inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary solutions. In this respect a number of contributions point out an apparent bias in the Sustainable Development Strategy. Some say the strategy is leaning too much towards environmental objectives. Others indicate that economic interest gets too much attention. Contributions also state that 'win-win-win' solutions, which serve economic, social and environmental objectives, can be found. For some respondents the assumption that trade-offs between the three pillars of the Sustainable Development Strategy are insurmountable is wrong.

A number of contributions state that policy coherence will not be achieved without a stronger political commitment to the sustainable development objectives. These objectives – specific and measurable – should be given a central and overriding place in EU-policy making, in

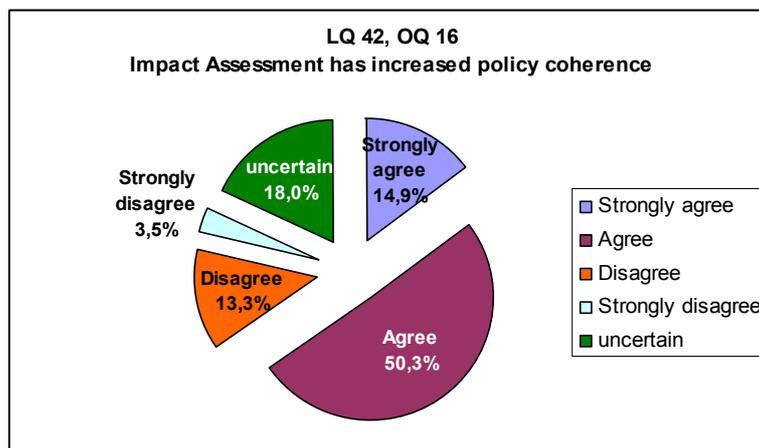
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<sup>47</sup> Long questionnaire N° 41

accordance with Article 6 of the EC-Treaty. This should be supported by tools and instruments to facilitate coordination in policy-making. Also in the framework of this question the point is made that the interaction between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy should be clarified.

## 1.2. Impact assessment<sup>48</sup>

There were 799 replies in the long and online questionnaires to the question on whether the introduction of impact assessment has increased policy coherence.



Most contributions (about 65 %) take a positive view of the introduction of the impact assessments by the Commission. The long questionnaire provided the possibility to make further comments. 107 contributions to this question were received.

Some contributions are not convinced that impact assessments make a difference and state that they serve short-term ‘business-as-usual interests’. Impact assessments are only reliable if they are based on a proper methodology and if sound data are used. However, most contributions recognize that this new instrument helps policy-makers analyse the social, economic and environmental impacts of a draft proposal.

A considerable number of contributions make the point that the expectations of impact assessments have not yet been fulfilled. The Commission is being warned by some contributions that impact assessments might become another bureaucratic layer and that this instrument does not lead to more integrative and creative thinking.

Many contributions reflect on the need to give equal weight to social, economic and environmental considerations. Again, contributions are divided on the way the Commission has done this so far. Some contributions say that the cumulative effects of legislation and other policy actions on European growth and competitiveness have not been properly studied. These contributions often refer to the impact assessment on the REACH-proposals<sup>49</sup> of the Commission and criticize it for being too narrow in scope, weak in its methodology and missing important aspects. Conversely, other contributions are concerned by the increasing emphasis on competitiveness, also in the application of the impact assessments. They

<sup>48</sup> Long questionnaire N° 41, online questionnaire N° 16

<sup>49</sup> Regulatory Framework for chemicals

underline that the promotion of sustainable development should be an explicit objective for the impact assessments. Alternative policy options are often neglected.

The possibility for stakeholders to influence the preparation of draft proposals during impact assessments is appreciated, but in a number of contributions the shortcomings of the public consultations are stressed. More transparency is needed and the Commission should be very cautious when it is calling for contributions. Some contributions state that certain interest groups have too much influence on the impact assessments.

A number of contributions have reservations about the fact that impact assessments are being conducted by the Directorate-General which is also responsible for the preparation of the proposal. This causes an inclination towards certain solutions, and alternative policies do not get a proper chance vis-à-vis the first ‘favoured’ option of the DG concerned.

### *1.3. Improvement of the impact assessment approach<sup>50</sup>*

Most contributions are quite satisfied with the impact assessment method. In view of the contributions above, some suggestions are made to improve the instrument. There is a call for standardisation and refinement of the method. Working towards a European standard for impact assessments is even suggested. The method could also be applied at national and local level.

Some contributions want to see a greater role for cost-benefit analysis in the identification of policy options. Others are reluctant to go along with this proposal and emphasize that effectiveness and monetization of impacts are not always the appropriate analytical tools.

A few contributions suggest transferring the responsibility for the impact assessment from the lead Directorate-General to an independent office for impact assessments. This would guarantee a neutral and more credible approach. Additional resources and time should be made available for impact assessments. A few contributions call for more high-level political commitment to the process. The quality of the studies should be checked thoroughly. A more systematic selection of the proposals that need an impact assessment is required.

Similarly, there is a call for an improved role and participation of stakeholders in impact assessments. In this respect, stakeholders should be allowed enough time to give their input. Moreover, some contributions stress that the Commission must pay more attention to the balance of input; all representative groups from society should be invited to give their views.

### *1.4. Implementation of impact assessment<sup>51</sup>*

Most contributions either do not reply to the question about areas where the impact assessment has not been applied sufficiently or feel that the impact assessment approach has been implemented adequately. A number of contributions suggest that the Commission did not make a judicious selection of the most important policy initiatives. These contributions mention competitiveness-related policies, but views differ on the areas where implementation should be improved. Some stress that impact assessments are being used to ensure that environment and social requirements do not impinge on the competitiveness of the industry and businesses. Others stress that impact assessments are not used effectively to ensure that

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<sup>50</sup> Long questionnaire N° 44

<sup>51</sup> Long questionnaire N° 45

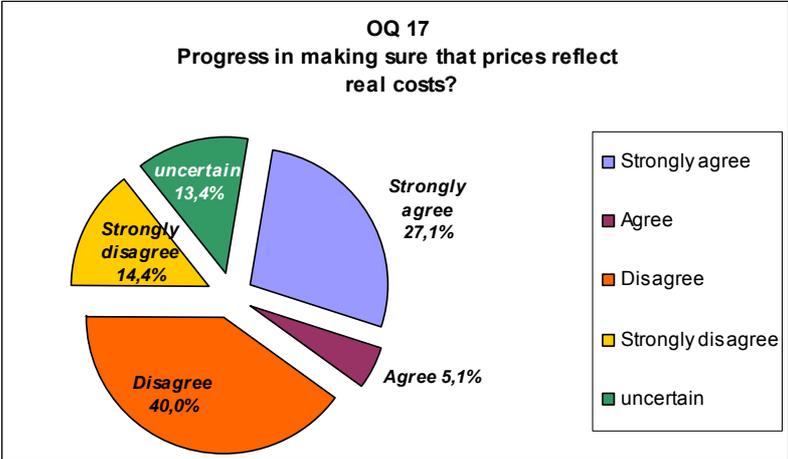
Europe becomes the most competitive economy - a factor which is also essential for securing sustainable development; too much emphasis is given to environmental and social concerns.

Some contributions bring up the international dimension. These contributions state that the impact assessments did not properly take into account the external impacts of certain proposals.

A number of contributions draw attention to the required extension of impact assessment method to the Council and the European Parliament, because of their powers to amend Commission proposals. Some contributions also point to the role of Member States when European directives are being implemented in national legislation.

## 2. Getting prices right to give signals to individuals and business

693 replies were received to the question whether there has been satisfactory progress over the past three years in the EU and Member States in making sure that prices reflect the true costs of economic activities to society<sup>52</sup>.



Some 55 % state that there has been no progress and many answers (mainly from non-governmental organisations, many of whom submitted identical answers, but also from public bodies and individuals) were in favour of making greater use of market-based instruments to support sustainable development by internalising external costs.

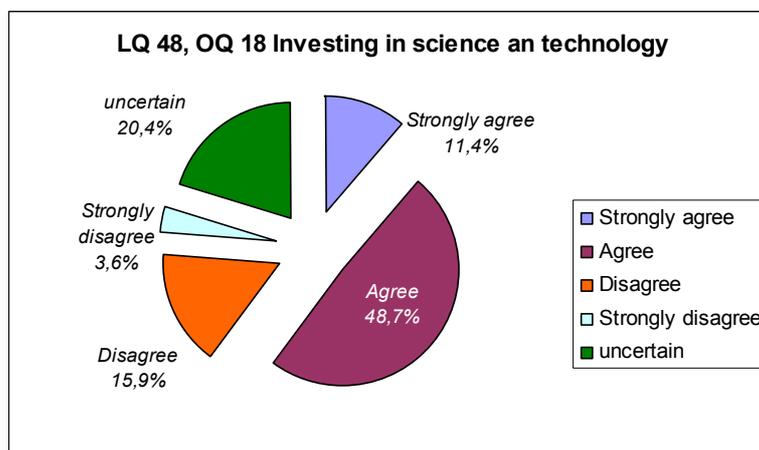
Replies from business associations were generally less favourable to taxation. They are more concerned with not disturbing competition. These contributions draw attention to the harm caused by subsidies, believing they should be abolished. Trade unions worry about the effect that measures might have on jobs.

<sup>52</sup> Long questionnaire N° 46 - 47, online questionnaire N° 17

### 3. Investing in science and technology for the future

#### 3.1. Actions and implementation in the area of science and technology<sup>53</sup>

This question was represented in both questionnaires: as a closed question in the online questionnaire and as free text possibility in the long version. Despite the huge difference in the number of replies (693 responses to the online questionnaire, around 90 to the long version), the concordance of the results is very clear.



The majority of contributions to both questionnaires consider that the actions identified in the area of science and technology are effectively contributing to sustainable development and are being correctly implemented. Most of the respondents mentioned that at strong dissemination of research results is needed, to demonstrate that “sustainability” is becoming a practical issue thanks to research efforts. Positive outcomes of research and technology should be better exploited to fulfil the needs of European citizens. Raising awareness and communication to public are only a few examples of actions that are necessary to be taken.

60 % of all contributions agree or strongly agree with the science and technology actions identified in the Sustainable Development Strategy, believing that those actions are appropriate for contributing to sustainable development. Only some 19 % of all contributions disagree or totally disagree on the appropriateness of the actions identified. It is worthwhile mentioning that 20.4% are uncertain about the adequacy of science and technology actions. Despite the general support given to the role of science and technology, the majority of those who replied recognise that science and technology have limitations and technological solutions are unlikely to resolve all the problems of the European society.

Among those who responded to the long questionnaire, the most critical contributions come from individuals. There is a low level of replies from academia and the business associations and individual enterprises.

Most contributions consider that sustainability should be a core issue in science and technology, and not a secondary one. EU policies should explicitly mention that economic growth should go hand in hand with environmental and social improvements. However, further work is needed in this area, especially to ensure better consistency between EU legislation, policy initiatives and science and technology programmes. For example,

<sup>53</sup> Long questionnaire N° 48, online questionnaire N° 18

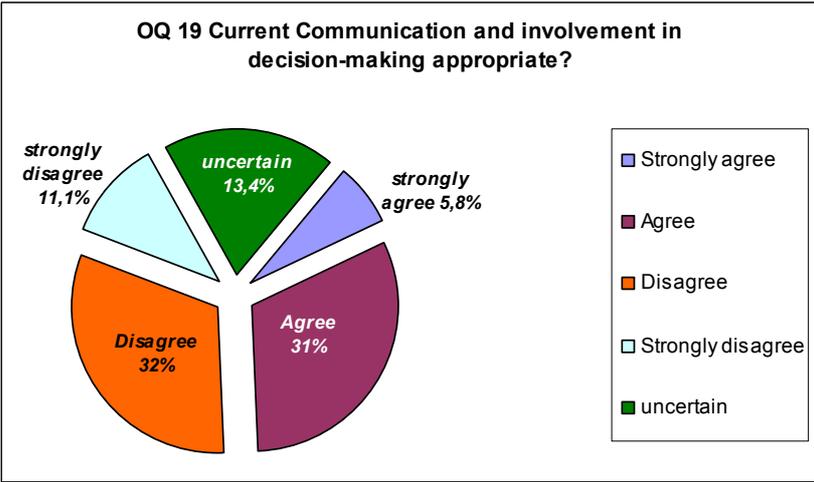
procedures and methods could be implemented to ensure that sustainability becomes a key criterion for the research funding mechanisms. Many contributions mention multi-disciplinary research combining natural sciences and socio-economic disciplines as an essential element of the future Framework Programme.

Some respondents suggested that “sustainability” could become a criterion to evaluate future research on policy options. This should allow a uniform, consistent framework to be applied that would enable the economic, environmental and social impacts to be given equal weighting.

Several contributions recognise the importance of the objective of 3 % of GDP invested in research and technological development by 2010 and of Technology Platforms for achieving sustainability.

More specifically, a few respondents asked for appropriate means of promotion and communication to be put in place to ensure the success of technology platforms. “Clean technologies” are mentioned by regional or local actors, especially regional agencies, as needing to be developed in the next Research Framework Programme, which demonstrates the relevance of the Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP).

**4. Improving Communication and Mobilising Citizens and Business**



There was a closed question in the online questionnaire<sup>54</sup> asking the public whether or not they agree that current communication and the involvement of citizens and business in decision making effectively support the EU's efforts to achieve the changes in behaviour that will be needed if we are to move toward long-term sustainability.

The majority of the 693 contributions are not satisfied with the communication and participation of citizens in the decision-making processes on EU-level. 43.1 % disagreed or strongly disagreed and only 36.8 % answered in the affirmative.

In the long questionnaire there was the possibility to formulate suggestions for improving the situation.

<sup>54</sup> Online questionnaire N° 19

#### 4.1. *Improvement of communication and participation in decision-making processes*<sup>55</sup>

There were 90 responses to this question in the long questionnaire. Almost half the contributions came from non-governmental organisations (37 out of the 90). The second largest group of respondents were business associations and individuals, with 10 contributions each. The rest of the replies were scattered among the other interest groups.

Another feature of this question was that the contributions from most of the non-governmental organisations (EEB, WWF Euro Office, Bird Life etc.) were co-ordinated and their responses were almost identical. Clearly, the key message which came out very strongly across the board, irrespective of the interest group, is that Stakeholder Consultations are a step in the right direction. However, the process needs to be strengthened (carried out systematically, announced well in advance and be allocated more resources), broadened (include all sections of society) and considerably improved (clearer, more information provided to stimulate discussion and at an earlier stage in the decision-making process). This message is echoed in more than 75% of the answers.

There is a repeated call for some kind of feedback loop to be established to allow stakeholders to see where their contributions have an impact on the final decision. This will also encourage people to reply to such consultations and avoid the danger of 'participation fatigue'. Contributions feel that consultations are often viewed as a 'stage' in decision making and not enough attention is given to the responses.

More resources (financial/technical assistance) should be provided to help the weaker sections of society to take part in public consultations. This remark mainly figures in the contributions of non-governmental organisations, trade unions and citizens, who fear that public consultations tend to be dominated by business groups and companies.

Conflicting messages come from business associations on the one hand and individuals and trade unions on the other hand regarding the value accorded to each response. Business feels that bigger business associations and companies should be given more importance than smaller companies and individuals, because they represent a larger section of society. Some non-governmental organisations state that the Commission should work with the 'front runners' of the business community.

Another often featured subject in the responses was the need for education on Sustainable Development. Respondents mentioned that the concept was not sufficiently understood by citizens and as long as this was the case it would be difficult to make the requisite changes in behaviour. The strategy in its current form lacked a chapter on education, especially youth education.

Almost all non-governmental organisations which replied (i.e. close to 50% of the respondents) mentioned that behavioural changes in society were possible only when policies and actions are consistent: prices, legal, fiscal measures need to be put in place which give a clear signal to citizens. Public authorities must set a good example, for instance in public procurement.

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<sup>55</sup> Long questionnaire N° 49

Coherent communication on the subject is difficult as long as there are two strategies on sustainable development (the Lisbon Strategy and the Sustainable Development Strategy). In order to make the concept credible, a number of contributions argue that we need to have one strategy for sustainable development with concrete objectives, responsibilities for implementation and monitoring.

The majority of the respondents feel that the concept of sustainable development is not clear and understandable. They express a need for the concept to be translated into practical issues that affect the citizen - in terms of mobility, consumption, housing, employment, etc.

Many contributions stress the ‘tone of communication’ on the subject, believing that the communication should be positive. In their view it is wrong to use disaster scenarios or warning advertisements. Sustainable development should be shown as positive opportunity for employment and well-being.

Non-governmental organisations highlight the need for communication, especially on the themes of climate change and biodiversity. Targeted campaigns on certain themes are considered more useful than general campaigns.

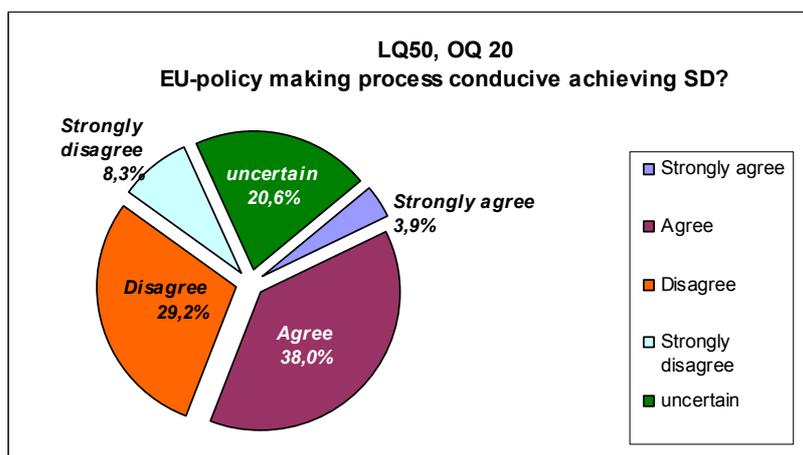
Local governments and regional administrations often state that in order to make communication effective, it should take place close to citizens on issues that concern them at local level.

Many contributions call for greater transparency in implementing the initiative for Corporate Social Responsibility. They also say that CSR is not trusted as it is limited to a small number of projects within companies. Outsiders are not able to make an objective judgement regarding sustainability within companies. A few respondents asked for CSR reporting to be made obligatory. Contributions from companies and business associations state that the EU should not make CSR reporting an obligation. This would entail the risk that companies would only meet minimum requirements. Some argue that it would also put an additional burden on the private sector. There were also calls for CSR implementation within the public sector.

Transparency is the word that recurs most often in the contributions to these questions concerning communication. A greater need for transparency is highlighted in all areas: in decision making, outcome of stakeholder conferences, communication and information provided to consumers.

The UN Decade of Sustainable Education (2005-2014) could be an interesting focus for EU action on the subject.

## **5. General assessment of changing policy making**



Both questionnaires included a closed question concerning the EU policy-making process in relation to sustainable development. A total of 789 replies were received. About 42 % agreed with the statement, but 37 % disagreed and a remarkable 21 % were uncertain<sup>56</sup>. This is a quite different picture from the answers to the free text question in the long questionnaire.

### 5.1. Sustainable development and other policy areas<sup>57</sup>

In the analysis of the replies to the free text question on whether EU policy making is conducive to achieving sustainable development, the majority of the 93 contributions are negative.

Many contributions point out that the sustainable development objectives are not really integrated in all policy areas. The lack of coherence between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy is also frequently mentioned.

In general contributions underline that the efforts made since 2001 are not enough ('piecemeal') to really bring about a significant change in policymaking. Many contributions call for clear objectives, operational targets, timetables and a full set of indicators to monitor progress. An integrated policy framework, based on principles and criteria, is needed for day-to-day decision-making; especially where conflicting objectives (e.g. fish quotas) have to be reconciled. A few contributions link the use of financial instruments, subsidies and funds to sustainable development. Scrutiny of money flows is of great importance.

Many contributions seem to believe that with an integrated and properly coordinated plan on the table a greater political commitment from European decision-makers to the sustainable development can be expected. The new Commission, with a decisive President, should commit itself to sustainable growth and prosperity. Within the Commission a horizontal independent group should examine all policies for their social, economic, and environmental impacts and work closely with the Lisbon Group.

In addition, contributions mention the role of the Council and the European Parliament. These institutions should also dedicate more time and attention ('Cardiff process') to the implementation of the sustainable development objectives. A renewed political commitment

<sup>56</sup> Long questionnaire N° 50, online questionnaire N° 20

<sup>57</sup> Long questionnaire N° 51

at European level will also encourage more action at the level of Member States and local authorities.

Some contributions favour a stronger emphasis on the economic impacts of EU-policies, while others clearly press for more concentration on the environmental and social effects of policy proposals.

Some contributions again bring up the quality of inter-service cooperation in the Commission and the method of impact assessment. The Commission must have the courage to reject a policy proposal if the impact assessment shows that the quality of the initiative is not up to standard. New policy making should lead to less bureaucracy and red tape. European legislation should refrain from detailed regulatory interventions but set clear and binding objectives linked to timetables.

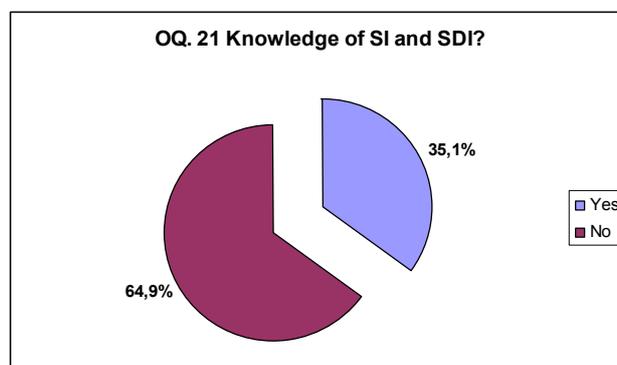
Enhanced stakeholder participation is needed if the revised strategy is to address the difficulty of mobilising public support. In this respect, a number of contributions emphasize that citizens should have the right to go to court or to an Ombudsman if EU-policies are in conflict with the sustainable development objectives.

## V. MEASURING AND REPORTING ON OUR PROGRESS – PART C

The Strategy required the Commission to report annually on the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Reporting takes place through the so-called Spring Report on the basis of a set of headline indicators. Recently, work has been undertaken by the Commission to develop more comprehensive sustainable development indicators.

In the Sustainable Development Strategy the Commission also announced that it would establish a sustainable development “round table” of independent experts representing a broad range of views, who would report directly to the Commission President in time for the preparation of the Commission’s synthesis report to the Spring European Council and make recommendations to improve the coherence of Community policies, and that it would hold a two-yearly Stakeholder forum to assess the EU’s strategy.

### 1.1 Knowledge of the Commission’s structural indicators and sustainable development indicators<sup>58</sup>.



All replies to the online questionnaire answered this question – and, by contrast with the long questionnaire (see below), some 65% are *unaware* of the Structural Indicators (SI) and the sustainable development indicators (SDI) of the Commission. Even among the responding organisations (243), only 28.8 % answered “yes” to this question”.

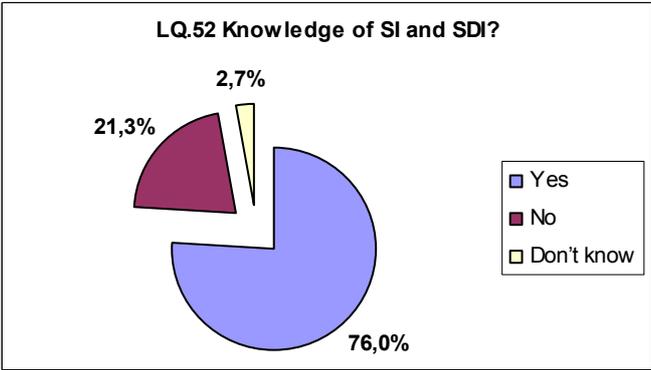
#### *Special situation in the long questionnaire<sup>59</sup>*

The following remarks could influence the general analysis of answers to questions 52-55. Firstly, question 52 of the long questionnaire did not take into account the fact that sustainable development indicators (SDI) had been adopted only recently by the Commission and were probably not well known to the general public. Some stakeholders are nevertheless aware of the SDI project, but it is difficult to determine which set of indicators – structural indicators or sustainable development indicators – the contributions are referring to. Secondly, results for both quantitative and qualitative questions are influenced by the fact that many environmental non-governmental organisations submitted identical answers. Thirdly, a group of 264 persons

<sup>58</sup> Online questionnaire N° 21

<sup>59</sup> Long questionnaire N° 52

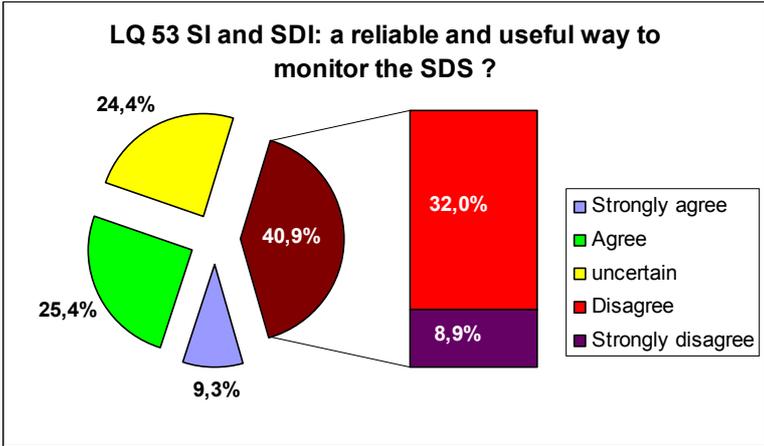
replied only to these questions in the whole questionnaire to support especially the implementation of a biodiversity indicator as proposed by Birdlife International.



The question of whether the public is familiar with the Commission’s structural and sustainable development indicators was answered by 360 of the contributions to the long questionnaire (including the 264 individual letters referring only to these questions on indicators and monitoring). A large majority of the contributions (76 %) showed *awareness* of the Structural Indicators and, in some cases, of the work on Sustainable Development Indicators.

1.2. *Monitoring progress with indicators*<sup>60</sup>

About 41% of all 290 contributions to the question referring the monitoring of sustainable development with indicators think that the indicators used for the Spring Report to the Council to report on the progress in the Lisbon Strategy (including the environmental indicators) are not adequate or proper indicators to measure and report progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Some of the responses given to question 55 explain why these stakeholders think that structural indicators are not appropriate for this use as reported below (paragraph 1.4).

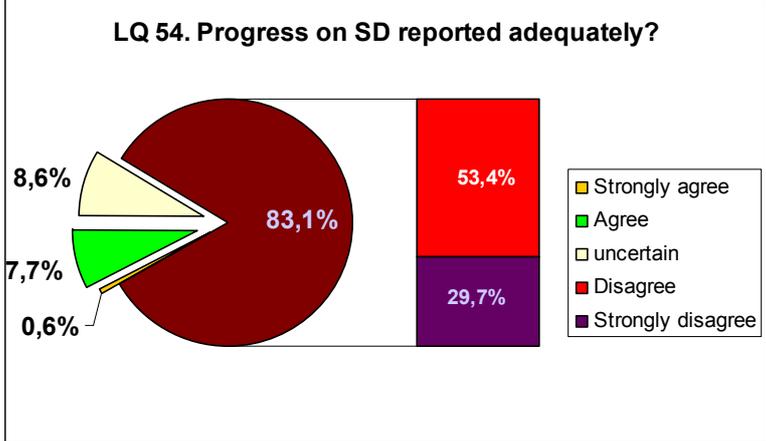


Some 35% of respondents share the opinion that structural (SI) and sustainability indicators (SDI) serve a useful purpose in monitoring sustainable development (agree or strongly agree).

<sup>60</sup> Long questionnaire N° 53

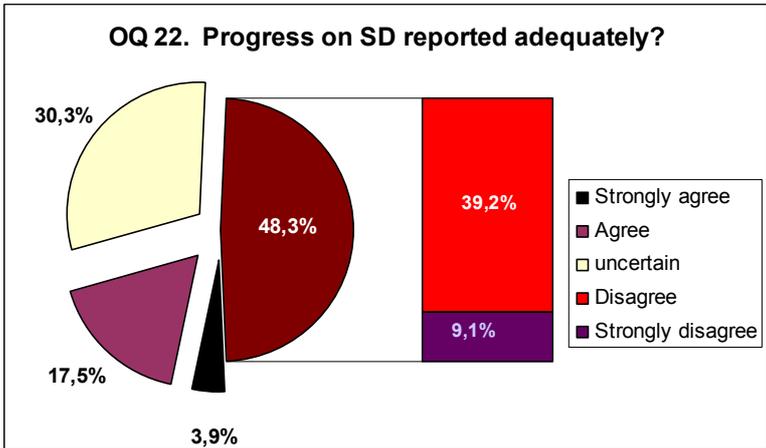
It is nevertheless noteworthy that, among those stakeholders who expressed the *positive* opinion that indicators (SI and SDI) are a reliable and useful way to monitor the progress in sustainable development, over 80% think that currently the progress on sustainable development is not adequately reported on (see next figure).

1.3. Report on the progress on sustainable development<sup>61</sup>



341 contributions were received to the question in the long questionnaire (including the 264 individual letters referring only to these questions on indicators and monitoring) on whether the public agrees that the progress on sustainable development is adequately reported on. A large majority of contributions (83.1 %) is of the opinion that progress on sustainable development is not reported adequately, while only 8.3 % hold the opposite opinion.

Question 54 has a wider content than question 53, which is only about the indicator part of reporting, and respondents have a more negative opinion about general communication on progress with sustainable development.



In the online questionnaire 684 replies were received. The picture is quite different for the long questionnaire. Although nearly half of the respondents also disagree or strongly disagree, but one third replied that they were “uncertain”.

<sup>61</sup> Long questionnaire N° 54, online questionnaire N° 22

#### *1.4. Criticism of monitoring and reporting on sustainable development<sup>62</sup>*

339 individuals and organisations in the long questionnaire explained their critical view on the present monitoring and reporting system. It is assumed (and mentioned explicitly by most of the respondents) that the answers refer to annual reports to the Spring Council and the use of structural indicators for monitoring sustainable development.

Most responses complain that indicators/reporting do not sufficiently cover some areas (like Biodiversity, Public Health, Modes of Production and Consumption, Quality of Life, Housing, Chemicals, Crime or Regional and Cultural Identity) or some concepts (like wealth, ecological footprint, qualitative aspects such as quality of work). Many contributions welcomed the inclusion of the Farmland Birds Index in the structural indicators list.

Several contributions think that the short-list of structural indicators does not cover sufficiently the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development and that a better balance should be found between the various dimensions. More specifically, some contributions call for the setting up of a proper list of sustainable development indicators in line with the UN Commission for Sustainable Development recommendations. A few of them mention the list of sustainable development indicators recently adopted by the Commission as a step in the right direction. One contribution mentions that the indicators set should be flexible enough to evolve with new priorities.

Several contributions consider that communication on sustainable development is too weak, with no comprehensive report on the subject. One contribution mentions the ‘lack of leadership for effectively monitoring the strategy’. It is also mentioned that reporting on sustainable development should deal with scenarios and predictable impacts, and not only report on what has actually happened.

Several contributions complain about the lack of participatory process. Some quote, for instance, the example of the structural indicators which were not ‘elaborated in a transparent way’.

Finally, several contributions stress the absence of a linkage between the EU, national and regional levels, for both strategies and indicators.

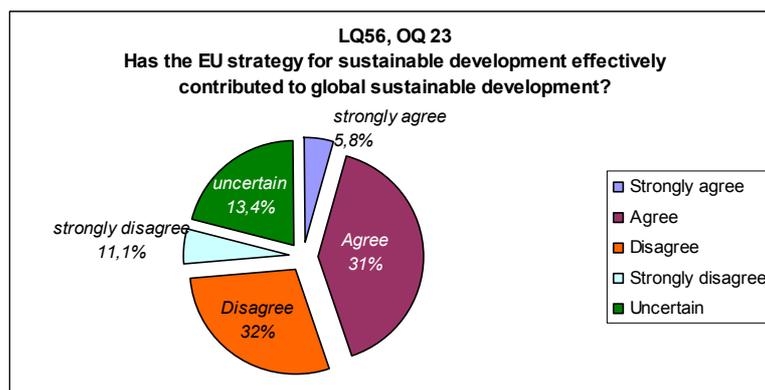
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<sup>62</sup> Long questionnaire N° 55

## VI. LINKING THE EU STRATEGY TO GLOBAL AND NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The Sustainable Development Strategy focused primarily on Europe. In the run-up to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in August 2002, the Strategy was supplemented by a Communication on the external dimension of sustainable development<sup>63</sup>.

### 1. The global dimension of sustainable development



In the online questionnaire as well as in the long questionnaire people were asked their opinion on the global dimension of sustainable development. Altogether there were 777 replies to this closed question<sup>64</sup>.

The majority (43.1 %) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the EU strategy has contributed effectively to global sustainable development. Some 36.8 % replied positively (agree or strongly agree)

In the long questionnaire the public was also able to give its opinion on the question of whether the EU's international commitments are translated directly into internal EU policies<sup>65</sup>.

81 individuals and organisations answered the question but quite a large group (64) did not reply or replied without following the format of the questionnaire. Several organisations (notably business and trade associations) decided to attach their position papers or a summary of ideas.

A large number of contributions disagreed with both statements, indicating a general disappointment with how the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy has been implemented and its contribution at international level.

<sup>63</sup> COM (2002)82 final of 13 February 2002

<sup>64</sup> Long questionnaire N° 56, online questionnaire 23

<sup>65</sup> Long questionnaire N° 57

### *1.1. Suggestions to improve the situation<sup>66</sup>*

Most answers come from environmental and animal welfare non-governmental organisations (23 organisations). These organisations in general also provide the most substantial comments. Once again, a number of non-governmental organisations coordinated their answers and provided identical comments in reply to these questions. Several business organisations and public bodies have made suggestions to improve the situation.

There is little to choose between the different groups of organisations in terms of their answers; that is to say that business organisations often make the same type of comments as environment organisations or government bodies. There are only a few very outspoken comments and remarks.

Contributions focus on three main strands of issues, namely: better assessment and integration of external consequences to EU internal policies; the need for a follow-up on commitments made in an international context; and the need for a closer link between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy processes – improved policy coherence.

Many contributions feel that better integration of sustainable development objectives into internal policies is needed. More consideration should be given to the fact that the EU's internal policies are likely to affect people outside the union and work against sustainable development objectives. There is a need to pay more attention to the international consequences – the global impact - of the EU's policies. A large number of organisations point out that external impacts of EU's trade and agriculture policies need to be better assessed. Many also emphasise that sectors such as fishing and natural resources are not sufficiently considered and that the Sustainable Development Strategy needs to address the “global footprint” of the EU.

Furthermore, it is argued that the EU's international commitments are not sufficiently reflected in its internal policies, notably sustainable production and consumption, increasing development assistance and global food security. The translation of EU's international commitments into internal policies should be assured across different policies. EU's financial instruments should take international commitments into account and the strategy and its international dimension should be better presented on a global scale.

Finally, many contributions made the point that the balance between the three pillars of the strategy must be better taken into account in international trade negotiations and that trade policy should be more consistent with development and environment policies. Several non-governmental organisations point out that the review should give greater weight to the global dimension. Most of the contributions express the need to improve the EU's follow up on external commitments and suggest that, although targets in general were set correctly, follow-up is too weak. Only one contribution argues that the EU's targets and commitments are unrealistic and need to be more modest in order to be credible and effective.

A large number of contributions suggest that different forms of reporting mechanisms, on actions and targets, should be put in place to report and review delivery of international commitments – traced through EU and Member States policy formulation and how different sectors are affected. The EU's commitments and political leadership have to be followed up

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<sup>66</sup> Long questionnaire N° 58

by actions on impact assessment. A few contributions suggest that the EU needs to recognise and address the profound inequality that exists in the burden-sharing of biodiversity goods and services at a global level and for the developed world. New ways of paying for the ecological footprint have to be found.

### *1.2. International priorities for the strategy*<sup>67</sup>

Most contributions often contain variations of the same messages: namely that the EU should use its political and financial weight internationally to ensure progress on essential sustainable development issues such as climate, natural resources, biodiversity, governance and poverty reduction; the EU must turn words into deeds in terms of commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Doha, Monterrey and the Millennium goals; and that the EU must better integrate sustainable development into all its policy areas.

Many contributions argue that the EU could do more to push the international agenda in the right direction if it made better use of its political and financial weight.

For a very large number of contributions, top priorities for the EU on the international agenda are: poverty reduction (including specific timetables for 0.7 % official development assistance (ODA) and more focus and concrete action on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change (including Kyoto implementation) and loss of biodiversity

Other issues often put forward are the need to: maximise use of renewable energy, minimise polluting activities, promote energy saving inter alia through new technologies, make progress on sustainable consumption and production (and on “getting the prices right”), halt and reverse forest loss, combat illegal logging and trade in forestry products, EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), fight corruption and increase the volume and effectiveness of development assistance, ensure sustainable water management and a sustainable supply chain for agriculture commodities and combat HIV. Many argue that resource conservation must be promoted by halting further liberalisation in non-agricultural market access for natural resources such as forestry, fish, oil, gas, mining (coalition).

A number of contributions suggested some inclusion of social concerns in world trade policies, such as fair trade. A couple of organisations also mention that globalisation demands that the Commission put in place the basic conditions to support the economy. One suggests that environmental activities/rules need to be checked from a cost-effectiveness and competitiveness point of view to see how far they really contribute to environmental protection. Another argues that the EU has to do more to “fund sustainability” so that core EU development funds such as the structural funds, EDB and Europe Aid adopt sustainability objectives to ensure that their programmes lead to sustainable outcomes.

Many replies stress the importance of mainstreaming sustainable development-objectives into sectoral decision-making, and several non-governmental organisations emphasise the need to maintain the balance between the three pillars, and not prioritising one pillar over the others.

Many contributions specifically mention the WTO and bilateral trade agreements and emphasise that environmental impact assessments and sustainable impact assessments must be carried out in all negotiations and trade deals in a policy-oriented way, so that the results

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<sup>67</sup> Long questionnaire N° 59

can be fully integrated into the decision-making. Contributions often mention the need to integrate SD concerns into trade and development cooperation and to ensure that SD is at the heart of all negotiating issues in the Doha Development Round. One organisation argues that the EU should be the “laboratory of a sustainable socio-economic model that should stand as a reference for global development”.

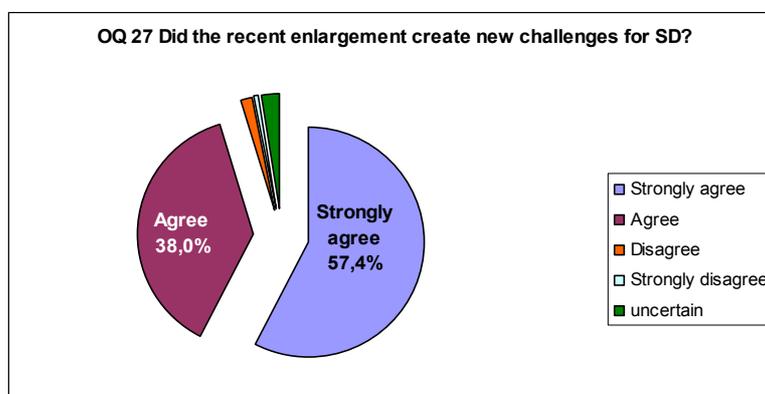
### 1.3. *EU internal policies – obstacle or support to global sustainable development*<sup>68</sup>

Most contributions to this question are variations or repetitions of the themes mentioned in reply to the questions 56 and 59.

The three most often repeated themes; the need to reform the Common Agricultural Policy and EU’s protectionist trade policies, in particular as regards textiles and agriculture, the need for effective impact assessments, including effective sustainable development indicators and monitoring mechanisms, the need to make policies coherent, make sustainable development a cornerstone of all policy areas and give it the same weight as other policy areas, such as internal market and competition. Many mention that sustainability concerns are not integrated sufficiently into trade negotiations.

## 2. **The national dimension**

In 2001 only a few Member States had national sustainable strategies but nowadays the majority do, including many of the new Member States. National strategies are both complex and diverse and there are clearly elements of overlap and interdependence between national strategies and the EU strategy.



### 2.1. *New challenges for sustainable development due to the recent enlargement*<sup>69</sup>

In both questionnaires the public was asked about the challenges to sustainable development resulting from the recent enlargement. In the online-questionnaire was given a closed question. All respondents, irrespective of group, either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that enlargement has created new challenges and opportunities for sustainable development which need to be taken into account. Only two percent gave “uncertain” or “disagree” as an answer. This underlines the opinion of stakeholders expressed in the long questionnaire.

<sup>68</sup> Long questionnaire N° 60

<sup>69</sup> Long questionnaire N° 61 and 62, online questionnaire N° 27

Question 62 in the long questionnaire gave stakeholders a further opportunity to comment. Numerically, most contributions are from non-governmental organisations, followed by public authorities and business associations. Again, it should be noted that most of the replies from non-governmental organisations were co-ordinated and many responses were almost identical.

The non-governmental organisations point to the fact that; the ten new Member States which joined in 2004 were not involved in the 2001 discussions on the current Sustainable Development Strategy. Therefore, it is important that, in the discussions on the review of the Strategy, the situation in these Member States is given special attention. There will be a need for a very strong social focus, given that the social agenda of these Member States is even more challenging than in the “old” Member States, and that the improvement of quality of life, employment and social security could be seen as a precondition for mobilizing public support for environmental measures. While the implementation of EU environmental policies in the ten new Member States will bring environmental benefits, they expect the biggest problems in four specific areas:

- Transport: While cars in these ten Member States will soon be technically cleaner, road traffic will increase enormously;
- Waste: Waste management will improve, but the total amount of household waste will increase drastically;
- Agriculture: The bulk of subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy, together with market pressures, will lead to a shift towards large-scale intensive farming and increased use of pesticides and fertilizers;
- Regional Policy: Without further reform, EU regional aid will continue to support environmentally damaging projects, despite the availability of better solutions.

The common denominator, NGOs state, is a lack of sustainable EU policies in these areas. Safeguarding the richness of the biodiversity of the new Member States is also considered a challenge. Using the financial and legal opportunities created by the EU to maintain and manage the natural resources of these countries and preserve their biodiversity represents not only a challenge but a great opportunity. This can be achieved by the simultaneous use of strong financial incentives, guidelines and the strict enforcement of existing regulation and legislation.

The challenge most often quoted by public authorities and business-related respondents relates to the “welfare gap” and the desire of the new EU-10 to “level up” economically with the old EU-15 and the possible consequences this may have. The need to seek a balance between the three pillars is considered of key importance. The EU will have to look at how to reconcile sustainable development and competitiveness.

## 2.2. *Better co-ordination between sustainable development strategies at different levels*<sup>70</sup>

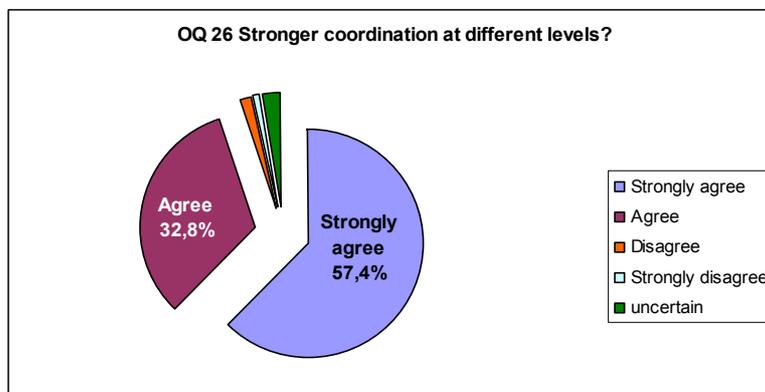
Slightly more than half of the contributions to the long questionnaire from the non-governmental organisations, business and public authorities replied to questions 63 - 64. In

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<sup>70</sup> Long questionnaire N° 63 - 64, online questionnaire N° 26

the case of the business associations, more than 80% of the respondents replied, but with short and fairly general answers. The replies from public authorities are the most detailed.

An overwhelming majority in both questionnaires, irrespective of group, either “agree” or “strongly agree” that there is a need for stronger co-ordination between sustainable development strategies at different levels.



The responses to the closed question in the online questionnaire as to be seen in the figure above underline this statement expressively.

The need to encourage the creation and implementation of national strategies in every EU country so as to achieve comprehensive coverage is mentioned by several respondents, as well as the need to develop a mechanism for regular review and consultation.

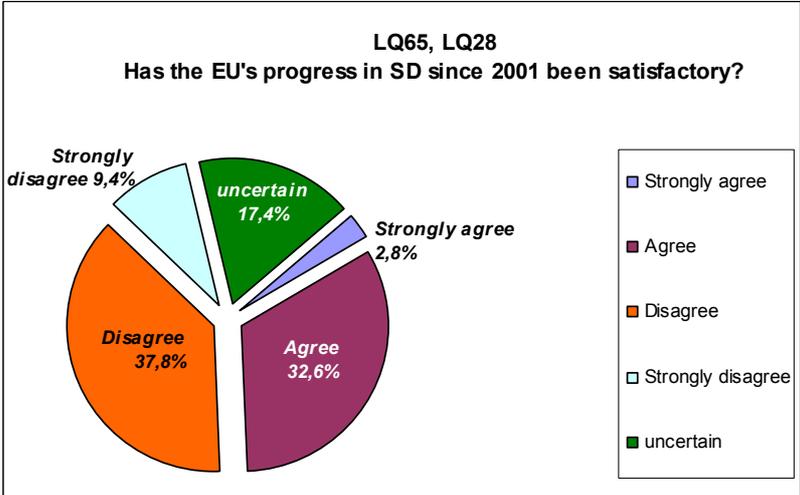
The exchange of best practices is strongly advocated, as well as the use of common headings or themes. Different policy levels could agree on common goals - while still recognising local, regional and differences - and find ways in which policies at different levels could mutually reinforce each other. There are core elements of sustainable development that all levels are likely to have in common. As far as possible, the approach on these issues should be similar.

Contributions from public authorities also stress the need to find the right balance between a bottom-up and a more traditional top-down approach through supporting more direct dialogue between EU processes and local and regional authorities, as well as community groups. Business associations second this view, supporting new governance where stakeholders at all levels take responsibility in the implementation of Sustainable Development Strategies. Business organisations suggest regular discussions on Sustainable Development Strategy progress and the relationship between the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy, to take place at Heads of Government level at the Spring Council. This would ensure stronger co-ordination in particular between the EU and the international level.

NGO respondents state that progress could initially be made by sharing best practice between Member States in policy and partnership action, by encouraging “joined-up” reporting on international priorities and commitments. A Sustainable Development formation of the Council of Ministers is also suggested as a way to drive the Sustainable Development Strategy process forward. A website specifically dedicated to the national strategies has also been proposed, which could be accessible to all for accountability and transparency.

**VII. OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

The public consultation concluded with a closed question in both questionnaires on the overall assessment of the EU’s progress towards sustainable development since 2001.



In total 791 replies to this question were received. 47 % of the contributions express a negative opinion on the progress achieved towards sustainable development in the European Union (disagree and strongly disagree). 35.4% of the contributions agree that the EU has made satisfactory progress. A large proportion (17.4%) is “uncertain” about the progress since 2001.