

EU Perspectives Report

This report covers the following deliverables: for Task 3, the "General sustainable development indicators information list" (parts 5 and 6); and for Task 4 the "EU perspectives assessment report" (parts 1-4) and the European input for the "Sources of information list."

EU PERSPECTIVES REPORT

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1. An EU summary on sustainability and indicators

The concept of Sustainable Development was first given real political momentum in the United Nations Brundtland Commission report of 1987 (Our Common Future). The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the Earth Summit) was a ground breaking meeting, adopting the Rio Declaration on environment and development, as well as the Agenda 21 Action Programme.

A Sustainable Development perspective tends to highlight the fact that many current policies often do not pay enough attention to long term issues, or the inter-linkages between different policy areas (such as between energy and environment). Achieving Sustainable Development therefore means improving the quality of policy making. Sustainable Development is therefore closely linked to Governance, Better Regulation and Impact Assessment. Indicators to measure progress are also vital.

The fundamental treaty of the European Union has established the principles of environmental defence and sustainable development, generating a number of research works and documents which pay specific attention to the urban environment. After 1990 ("Green Paper on the Urban Environment") work proceeded with such seminal documents as "European Sustainable Cities" produced by an Expert Group on the Urban Environment in 1996.

The transition towards more Sustainable Development is a strategic goal for the European Union. This is a long-term process requiring structural changes in our economy and society, but also in the way we develop and implement policies. In order to succeed, this will require the active participation of all sectors and groups (Community institutions, the Member States, the private and the non-governmental sectors and local authorities).

In June 2001, the European Council at Gothenburg discussed a strategy for Sustainable Development proposed by the European Commission (A sustainable Europe for a better world: A European strategy for Sustainable Development). This strategy proposed measures to deal with important threats to our well being, such as climate change, poverty, and emerging health risks, which had been identified in a consultation paper in March 2001.

The EU is also committed to promoting Sustainable Development at the global level. Communications of the Commission followed in 1996,

and recently in 2004 (EC, 2004), while urban sustainability was included in a number of European policies and documents and support was provided for various networking, co-operation and research initiatives (EEA, 1993, 1998, 2003, EC, 1996, 1997, 2000, etc.). These actions interacted with the 5th Environmental Action Programme, and subsequently the 6th, in order to support Agenda 21 initiatives.

Not only have environmental issues entered the European debate and policies, but also the territory has become an issue, as stated by the European Spatial Development Perspective, a document approved in 1999 after a decade of studies and proposals and which examined the spatial organization dynamics taking place at continental level, and the effects on it of European policies (EC, 1999).

Within this general international framework of statements, agreements and guidelines, appropriate responses must be devised at the local level to remedy the lack of normative obligations or of political interest. Local administrations, in particular those of cities, are specifically concerned with the promotion of urban sustainability, but also public agencies and private enterprises responsible for the provision of services, as well as technicians and practitioners engaged in planning and consulting, must play an important role.

Actions aimed at improving the urban environment result from the spread of scientific awareness and technical advances, from the dissemination of "good practices", and most often from pressure applied by citizens. Many administrations actively promote urban sustainability, often doing so within co-operation networks set up to pursue general or specific goals or to activate assessment and improvement procedures like local Agenda 21. (Environment 2010: Our future, our choice, The 6th Environment program 2001-10 full text, European Commission, Belgium 2001).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development was organised in Johannesburg in the autumn of 2002. The Summit sought to assess what progress had been made since Rio, and to promote action at all levels that would help eradicate poverty, change unsustainable consumption and production patterns and to ensure sustainable management and protection of natural resources. (Official Site of the Secretariat General, European Commission).

The Commission adopted a second paper that covers the external policies in February 2002, adding a global dimension to the EU strategy (Towards a global partnership for Sustainable Development). This was an important Community input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The outcome of Johannesburg includes the Johannesburg plan of implementation, with concrete new targets and timetables for action, as well as a political declaration by Heads of State. Johannesburg also saw the launching of partnership agreement between governments, the private sector and

the civil society. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development will review progress and promote implementation of the Johannesburg commitments (Official Site of the Secretariat General, European Commission). According to the Information Note of Mr. President of the Commission, Mr. Nielson and Mme Walstrom, here are the results of the Johannesburg Global Summit on Sustainable development, September 2002:

- Need for more MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS
- Problems identified:
 - LACK OF TRUST
 - LACK OF INTENSITY OF PUBLIC REACTION
 - LACK OF INVOLVEMENT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY
- FOCUS ON FOLLOW UP AND IMPLEMENTATION
- ENCOURAGEMENT OF TRADE IN SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS
- CAPACITY BUILDING
- RESPONSIBLE, CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
- RECOMMITMENT TO NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY 2005 (Official Site of the DG ENV, European Commission).

According to the Workshop on "Capacity-Building in Governance and Public Administration for Sustainable Development in Countries with Economies in Transition" held in Thessaloniki, Greece, 29-31 July, sustainable development is a process, aiming at finding short and long term balance, rather than some finite policy option, therefore systems of governance need to recognize that SD governance should allow a continual process of refinement, dialogue, diversity, adaptation and change. When targeting sustainability, the main issues to be addressed are:

- Vision for the future of each country, each sub-region and the region towards sustainable development;
- Clear objectives
- Central Role of the public administration to develop a common vision, design a strategy and ensure coordination among stakeholders and coherence for their proposals to enhance partnership initiative and strengthen participation of all at all levels
- State, local administrations, NGO, Civil Society, Sub-regional, Regional institutions, International Community: the role of each and possible partnership to reach the common vision in sustainable development
- Linkages and conciliation between all levels (regional, sub-regional, national and local levels) considering the future integration into the European Union
- Integrated cross-sector/space, conflict-sensitive and inclusive approach for poverty alleviation, sustained economic growth and sustainable development for all and by all
- Conciliation between generations (present and future), urgent needs of population (short-term), social and economic development (mid-term) and sustainable development (long-term)

- Capacity building and human resource development
- Regional cooperation, South-South cooperation, North–South cooperation,
- International co-operation, as proposed in the Conference final report.

According to Donald Boyle (“Indicators for Sustainable Urban Development” Delft 1998), indicators are not new. Financial markets have long made use of indices to reflect the health, or otherwise, of stocks and shares. Economists have their figures of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and environmentalists their pollution indices. Indicators are tools which attempt to meet all these different needs. Good Indicators present information in a clear and usable form at the right time to those who need it.

And yet Agenda 21, adopted in June 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, expressed the concern that conventional economy and environmental indicators *“do not provide adequate indications of sustainability.”* (Agenda 21, Chapter 40). Methods for assessing *“interactions between different sectoral, environmental, demographic, social and development parameters are not sufficiently developed or applied.”* The same chapter of the international blueprint for action goes on to note that the establishment of sustainability indicators is viewed as a fundamental element of the strategy to implement programs. *“Indicators of Sustainable Development need to be developed to provide a solid basis for decision-making at all levels and to contribute to the self regulating sustainability of integrated environmental and development systems.”* The author also supports that: *“the European Commission’s Fifth Action Programme ‘Towards Sustainability’ published in 1993, also noted a serious lack of indicators and other quantitative and qualitative material required to assess environmental conditions and trends in Europe”.*

Equally Yvonne van Delft (1998) provides some more examples of experiences with indicators as follows:

- “The Local Government and Management Board, the British Council of Municipalities has developed an “indicator menu”. Municipalities can make their own appropriate selection to use in their city.
- In 1994-1995 The International Institute for the Urban Environment co-ordinated the European Sustainability Index Project for DG XI of the European Commission. The cities of Freiburg (D), Leicester (UK), Leipzig (D), Valencia (ES), Hanover (D), Brussels (B), Amsterdam (NL), Den Haag (NL), Temi (IT), Alborg (DK) and Breda (NL) tried to find a set of common indicators to make comparison possible. The results of the project are described in the brochure ‘Our City in the Picture’
- The Dobris Assessment of 1995 tried to give an overview of the state of the environment in Europe including Eastern Europe.” In

1998 the next report Dobris +3 will be published and will have a stronger political message”.

Finally we can state some more examples of indicators menu, giving an idea of the great number of available indicators in the international bibliography:

- The different variables and Indicators proposed to Eurostat (for example: in the category housing and private property a) the number of building Permits granted in one year b) proportion of housing units built before 1914 c) proportion of housing units built since 1970 etc....
- The LGMB Indicators Menu: a total of 101 possible indicators were included, grouped under the LGMB's thirteen “themes” of sustainable development.
- The city of The Hague itself developed the environmental thermometer in order to ascertain by visual presentation of environmental data whether and to what extent, the targets and objectives of the environmental policy -in the Hague- will be achieved within the foreseeable future.

(Source: Delft 1998, “Indicators for Sustainable Urban Development,” The International Institute for the Urban Environment)

2. The logical framework of Indicators list synthesis

Since 1995 the Municipality of Xanthi assigned the Mayor’s advisor to be present and assure the follow up of the international and European research reality, on sustainable strategies, tools and instruments, presented, foreseen, tested or proposed in international meetings and conferences, in projects, in the bibliography, in the different European Universities and in key to the subject- for their work and commitment - Cities and regions at a European wide context.

Being always in contact with the reality of the “local dimension” and acting from the European periphery, we were coming across a plethora of information, available in many international meetings that our European activity enabled us to take part. We slowly -but constantly- obtained a specific knowledge – experience to filter the big quantity of received information and we very early searched both for the quality and innovation components. We also made efforts to be continuously aware of the existing problems and we tried always to have clear objectives. Finally, our work also consisted in informing and sensitizing the decision- making actors in order to agree and ask for the follow up of this process.

This philosophy, together with the focus that we put into two key words – key poles of our interest- the International and the local- became our criteria to propose to the Cypriot partner the so far

available (tested) information to us and transfer then successfully our experience and know-how.

The international and the local poles, or better to investigate what the international scene was foreseeing for the local, was since the beginning our target. This was our attempt for a better understanding of the so called "bottom-up approach" this new principle introduced and strongly defended by the sustainable planning strategic approach.

During our research study and after careful analysis of the different European National case studies on sustainability and tools- indicators, the local component either was weak either not reflected at all.

In other more decentralized countries - "membres fondateurs" of UE- where the regions have elected President and real legislative power, the sustainability strategic planning and measurement of indicators is a regional competence.

In addition to that at the time of compilation of the strategic master plan for Xanthi and the city's thematic indicator's system- presented and distinct in 1996 and 1998 internationally- in Greece was not existing any national sustainability plan or national indicator's system. This came right after and the latest report from the national level is following this communication in attachment as requested.

3. Some thoughts relative to the philosophy of the formation of an indicator: "the indicator as an instrument of aid in decision making"

(Source: The 1998 list of 100 Best Practices of the U.N.C.H.S-Habitat Application File of the City of Xanthi, MORAITOU, I., U.N.C.H.S. - Habitat and the Municipality of Dubai)

1. Proposing "greener" conditions in management
 - indicator: instrument in aid of development
 - indicator: instrument capable to prove the success of a "greener" planning
2. Providing an Inventory of the state of the environment, of the development profile of the existing policies and of the available planning procedures
3. Considering multiple goals
4. Monitoring development process
5. Supporting common efforts, reinforcing the role des major actors within an active partnership for sustainable development
6. Enhancing information provision in order to attain in well structured, well established decisions
7. Supporting international co-operation in aid of the enlargement of the concept, of the preoccupations, of the approaches and of the followed methodology in order to treat the actual problems

procuring at the same time a legislative, institutional and regulatory framework

8. Introducing a more thematic approach
9. Introducing a more integrative approach
10. Introducing a more multi-dimensional approach
11. Introducing a more elaborated transversal approach

4. Choosing indicators for Local Sustainability: what strategy and what policy option.

Choices are made according to:

- Data availability
- Policy priorities (as defined by local inputs in Cyprus after the meetings, the extended collaboration with the local administration and experts and the e-mail exchanged regarding the local strategy definition)
- EU policy-making priorities
- Local authorities competencies (local governments in different parts of Europe have different responsibilities, different legislative instruments to implement their policies, are dealing with different matters from one country to another and have finally very different own financial means to implement inner strategies-policies and actions. This fact influence very much the choice of indicators and their use)
- No difference is made between big or small problems, big or small cities. Global approach to common problems is the philosophy of tackling major issues that modern societies are facing in the entire EU territory, according to sustainability principles and without risks of new disparities creation or fragmented approaches. Adoption of indicators should be inspired primarily by local needs and priorities presented by the locals.
- Finally the following observations:
 - The existence of an enormous amount of indicators in the international research scene, which are coming not only from national but also from regional or local efforts towards sustainable development, allows to borrow existing indicators in order to shape up our proposed list. This way we succeed to not add more figures to the already "inflated" available indicators systems.
 - The overall process that so far used in the program concerning the creation of the list of indicators was a clearly top down approach. The local managers were directly questioned. In the future the local managers shall be responsible for the implementation of the proposed and finalised list of indicators therefore this proposed system should feet to their proper needs; it shall be modified according to local priorities which are continuously monitored via the different project stages.

Approach and elaboration:

- Core-List of indicators (initially proposed 60 Indicators) finally screened: 450
- Summary List (initially proposed 10 Indicators) finally proposed more than 200
- Indicators list proposed by Cypriot experts

Willing to underline that the process of indicators selection is an open procedure here are several important observations – recommendations that will contribute to the urban guard project overall objectives:

- Define clear objectives-strategy options
- Be “different”
- Not be specifically “influenced” without reason
- Keep the objectivity component very high
- Keep in mind the analogy of “country - area” dimensions and proposed number of measurements
- Have an exact understanding of problems- obstacles- constraints
- Face the fact that recently the international- European scene never ceases to produce endless reports and indicators lists, most of the times with minor impact or application
- Do not overestimate indicators and other tools. Attribute to them their real dimension, face again their limits and give priority to strategic planning, long term objectives setting up and transparent goals.
- Finally “Bottom - up” approach obliges to seriously take into consideration both local and regional decision- makers inputs together with people’s needs.

In addition to that and in order to better understand our action so far, it is important to state the proposed -by the 2003 Thessaloniki conference -logical framework of operation, when targeting at building a sustainable strategy. This also targets at using the most appropriate tools for that. This reflects quite accurately the methodological part of our process followed in order to choose the specific list of indicators for Cyprus (July 2004) and propose them to the project consortium.

Presentation of the current country situation

- What is the situation today
- What are the major areas of concern
- What are the main vulnerable sectors

Problems/solutions

- What are the main problems identified?
- What are the main problematic issues identified?
- What are the solutions proposed and implemented?
- Some examples of success stories, partnership initiatives, best practices and innovative experiences at local, national and regional levels

Lessons learned

- To establish participatory approaches and good governance

- To build and reinforce institutional structures and capacities
- To strengthen human resources capacities
- To ensure coordination and consensus building in the formulation and implementation of national development strategies and policies
- To incorporate sustainability principles, objectives and tools into public policy-making
- To ensure participation of major groups in capacity building
- To formulate and implement cross-sector strategies, programmes, initiatives and projects
- Others lessons and recommendations if any

There is a clear link established between the indicators chosen and the spatial development policies as this is described in the minutes of the Cypriot meeting on February the 9th. Screening the different categories used in both the meeting minutes and the provided 200 indicators list, you can easily identify the compatibility envisaged between the spatial development policies objectives and the local priorities requirements. In addition the list provided by the Cypriot experts- as part of the local hierarchy and strategic priority are mainly spatial development oriented and this was a prior negative point because we are asked to act for sustainability and not only for the sake of a sectorised policy. Sustainability is a global concept that enhances quality of life. Spatial development objectives satisfaction is important but only one part of this cycle.

The following General Recommendations are also suggested:

- To design a long-term vision for sustainable development for the region, each sub-region and for each country and locality;
- To build consensus on the vision and to set up realistic objectives at all levels following a multi-stakeholder approach;
- To formulate integrated strategic action plans for each level;
- To allocate/agree on distribution of responsibilities, roles, activities, means between stakeholders;
- To formulate partnership initiatives;
- To seek for innovative experiences, methods, practices, procedures, mechanisms;
- To set up coordination/discussion committees at all levels for dialogue, consensus, design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation
- To strengthen accountability, transparency and ethics through enhanced implementation, monitoring, review and, where necessary, realignment of agreed institutional processes;
- To strengthen national, sub-national and local capacities for sustainable development;
- To strengthen and better integrate the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions in sustainable development policies and programmes, as well as ensure that SD long-, mid- and short-term objectives are fully integrated in policies and programmes of institutions at all levels and for all sectors and stakeholders;

- To enhance participation of major groups for achieving the involvement of all stakeholders;
- To build civil society and especially NGOs' capacity;
- To develop and implement a wide range of inclusive and qualitative participatory processes at local, sub-national and national levels;
- To ensure access to information and to share experiences among the countries of the region based on participatory, integrated and cross-sector approach

And in addition:

- It is recommended to establish participatory institutional structures, which will have a positive impact on consensus building in the formulation of national development strategies.
- It is recommended for the countries to incorporate sustainability principles, objectives and tools into public policy-making

It is recommended to ensure participation of major groups in capacity building in governance and public administration for sustainable development. Civil society groups should play an important role in the implementation of the strategies, programs and action plans. The private sector is also important for the implementation of sustainable development objectives through its investment and technology decisions.

At this point it is also important to state what the International Institute for the Urban Environment, (1994), supports: the choice of indicators to be used depends on three factors:

- In what way sustainability is defined
- Which environmental, social and economic problems and features in the area to be measured
- Which measures you want to evaluate (for instance: consumption patterns to be changed)

More precisely for our case, examples were taken from Brussels and Xanthi due to the fact that the URBANGUARD project partners are the immediate sources of information that this project should take at first into consideration. This justifies the use of bibliographic suggestions no 8, 10, 11. The UN report (bibliographic reference no 3) is very efficient baseline information in order to transfer an international dimension to our work. After that, we tackle the European information component with the references no 2 and 6 and the innovation and quality component with references no 12 and 7. An extended basis of our choice for the proposed indicators list was the Urban Audit platform. Three are the main reasons for that: a) This is the most recent, complete and tested work, tailor made for local and regional authorities b) Cyprus case on sustainability building capacity for local and regional application, comes late (17 years after Brundtland and 12 years after Rio confirming the gaps identified globally in Johannesburg). Nevertheless, this is a fact. Trying to propose extremely long or sophisticated tools, just for the pleasure of science

or management, then we risk seriously missing the target of more sustainable futures with more quality. Finally c) this suggestion consist a balanced approach, in measuring sustainability at a local level, with efficiency without exaggerations, that most of the times remain non understood or even non applicable at the "usual", frequent, local and regional scale, cases.

The Finnish example (reference no 4, 5) is one of the best examples from the European experience. The choice of this extremely "opposite" example - in terms of geography- with the Cyprus case that we are currently analyzing, is again a challenge for the research team, to extract the best practice that really feet's with the local requirements and aspirations. Finally DG RTD Cost program (reference no 9) is one of the best accurate sources to acquire available relative information reflecting the pan European academic research level.

5. Bibliographic references used in the compilation of the Indicators list

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6. Extended Bibliographic list used for the identification of the Indicators

The below extended list of references was the first pool of indicators used in order to propose the more than 200 indicators and they are available in partner's headquarters' library.

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