

Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators
Eurostat, Luxembourg, 5-6 April 2006

SDI : the French experience

In brief

Earlier stages : Work on devising SDI began in France in 1997, on behalf of the Ministry in charge of Environment. Mandate was given to Ifen to coordinate the French participation to the testing process of the UN CSD indicators and also to conduct methodological reflections. The main outcomes of this latter work, was a list of 45 SDI, structured in an integrated framework (modular approach), put forward by Ifen as a contribution to the debate, and published in 2003.

Since 2003 : the French National SD Strategy and the SDI process

In 2003, the French Government adopted a National SD Strategy, which calls for producing regularly a state of SD Report based on indicators. Since this date, work on National SDI is linked to the Strategy and is developed through an inter-ministerial process.

Organisation of SD in France : linked to the strategy process

Following the French political commitment at the 2002 WSSD, a process was launched to develop a National SD Strategy. To facilitate the strategy process, two bodies were set up in 2003 : an inter-ministerial Committee for SD, chaired by the Prime Minister, and a National Council for SD, bringing together 90 representatives from civil society and local authorities.

The National SD Strategy, adopted in 2003, *“establishes an intervention framework to take into account long-term and global effects resulting from economic development and individual behaviour. It directs the governmental action for the next 5 years and fixes objectives to every minister”*. The Strategy is constructed around 10 action programmes with objectives.

Implementation of the strategy

Each Minister is responsible for the implementation of the strategy. A « senior official in charge of SD » is nominated in each ministry, and the actions of all Ministries are coordinated by the inter-ministerial Delegate in charge of SD. Within the Ministry of Ecology and SD, a specific service (a delegation) is in charge of the follow-up of the strategy.

The state of implementation of the strategy is communicated every year to the Parliament : the first annual report was presented in 2004, the second was released in 2005. A monitoring board of the state of realisation of the 500 actions of the strategy is also available on Internet and regularly updated.

As it is announced in the strategy, an Environment Charter was incorporated in the preamble of the French Constitution (voted at the Parliament in March 2005).

Monitoring : the National SDI process

The Strategy calls for producing regularly a state of SD report based on indicators. Work on National SDI is developed by an inter-ministerial working group, chaired by the inter-ministerial Delegate in charge of SD, involving representatives of statistical and studies departments of the main ministries (incl. IFEN), and the civil society.

A first Report on National SDI was published in 2004. As a starting point, the traditional “3 pillars” approach was preferred ; long time series, and coherence with EU indicators also guided the selection. A presentation of 45 National SDI give the situation of France and the main trends regarding SD and the selection of 15 Headline indicators highlight the main SD issues.

A second report presenting a revised list of National SDI is to be published in 2006. Learning from the first exercise and from the SDI Task Force experience, the revised list is refocusing on 8 priority issues : Resources for future growth, Social cohesion, ways of life and health, Climate change, Biodiversity and natural resources, Production and consumption patterns, Inter-generational equity, Good governance, Sustainable spatial planning.

Evaluation and communication

Evaluation : the strategy was evaluated through a Peer-Review in 2005, and will be reviewed in 2008.

Communication : the 2004 Report on National SDI was made official by a communication by the Council of Ministers (December 2004). The next Report will be communicated to the public in June 2006 (annual Week dedicated to SD)

Bibliography :

- The French National Sustainable Development Strategy : <http://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/SNDDenglish.pdf>
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- IFEN, 2003. *45 indicators of sustainable development : a contribution from Ifen*, 24 p., Extracts from : “45 indicateurs de développement durable : une contribution de l’Ifen”, Coll. Etudes & Travaux n°41, 144 p., décembre 2003.
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