

Towards a Sustainable Future

Report on the Conference *Investing in Sustainable Development*

1 – 2 February 2004, Dublin Castle, Ireland

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1 A message from ETUC, EEB and Social Platform

The urgent need for a more sustainable form of development is paralleled by the need for different parts of civil society to join together in order to promote this common cause. The conference reported here was a positive response to this imperative, signalling a maturing relationship between environmental organisations, trade unions and social organisations in working to develop a new agenda for society.

A collective vision of a society with a clean and safe environment, where social inclusion is the norm and people can find fulfillment in quality jobs, is translated into concrete steps and actions in the campaign manifesto launched at the conference. Sustainable development does not have to be an abstract ideal, but can become a concrete reality. At Dublin, this message was reinforced and given added momentum.

The conference was one outcome of ongoing cooperation between the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the Social Platform over a number of years. A common ETUC and EEB input to the development of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001 led to more systematic cooperation between the ETUC, the EEB and the Social Platform in 2002 regarding

the implementation of sustainable development policies. Joint messages to the Spring European Council meetings in 2002 and 2003 promoted full integration of the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) into the Lisbon Process. However, the Barcelona Spring Summit in March 2002 made it clear that the process would lose momentum without a stronger message from society. Thus was born the 'Investing for a Sustainable Future' campaign, emphasising the importance of consistently backing stated priorities with real financial resources and political will.

This campaign can only succeed if national, regional and local-level civil society organisations adopt it as their own and channel its message in ways which will make an impact in their countries. We hope that the conference in Dublin gave a boost to this. The conference also showed that we need to continue to promote better policies at EU level, which has such an impact on possibilities for action in the Member States. However, the results of the Spring Summit in 2004 since the conference have demonstrated that this is a great challenge, especially in the current climate where 'competitiveness' is the holy grail which demands no impedance from social and environmental constraints. Pressure thus has to come from all sides.

For 2004 a number of further activities are planned to help make sustainable development work. The new EU Public Procurement directives represent an opportunity to tap into a financial resource which is potentially a huge driver for sustainable development. The campaign will work to promote the use of these directives for 'green and social' public procurement, and help our members at national level to urge their public authorities to make the most of them.

2004 and 2005 will also see a number of important moments in the debate about the kind of development Europe will pursue. During the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, and the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the three organisations will promote a positive implementation of the Lisbon Strategy so that it truly contributes to sustainable development. This message will be promoted strongly to the new European Parliament in July 2004 and the new European Commission in November.

Finally, we hope that the gathering of like-minded organisations in Dublin has galvanised enthusiasm and focused minds on promoting a common vision of a better society, at local, regional, national or European level. For our part, we see a need more urgent than ever for clear common messages to governments and authorities, and will continue to work together wherever possible to help guide the way towards a sustainable future.

EEB, ETUC, Social Platform

June 2004



2 Introduction – three sectors come together

On 1 and 2 February 2004, Dublin Castle hosted an unusual and dynamic conference. About 150 members from European social and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions from all over Europe came together to promote investment in sustainable development projects in Europe. Participants engaged in lively discussions on how to get European policies on sustainable development on the right track. The conference was organised by three different organisations, representing tens of millions of EU citizens: the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform).

According to Ralph Hallo, President of the EEB, *'The conference demonstrated how trade unions, social organisations and environmental groups can come together and work together in a concrete and positive way.'*

John Monks, General Secretary of ETUC also held that *'The work we are discussing here is the result of a ground-breaking collaboration between the ETUC and social and environmental NGOs that has already borne fruit, notably through the 'Green Jobs' project.'* Fintan Farrell from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) stressed that the conference was a step in the right direction toward a situation *'where policies are not just balanced, but where all policies put people first.'*

Finally, Werner Schneider from the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) added: *'What we see today is that social and ecological factors are being excluded [from policy-making]. It is therefore very important that we insist in our message to Europe that we form one thought, one approach to sustainable development and that we have to promote the concept of sustainable development in everyday politics.'*

On the first day of the conference, the three groups engaged in a discussion on how to promote their campaign *'Investing in Sustainable Development'*, with concrete examples from the housing and transport sector (*see Chapter 5*). The main topic on the second conference day was a proposal for a common manifesto, presented to the Taoiseach, the Irish Premier Bertie Ahern, the Irish Minister for Environment Martin Cullen, Catherine Day from the European Commission and Proinsias de Rossa from the European Parliament (*see Chapter 6*). Bertie Ahern was urged to promote the demands of the manifesto at the 2004 Spring Summit of the European Council. John Hontelez (EEB) stressed that *'It is the conviction of our three families that public authorities should play an active and not a passive role in developing a sustainable society.'*



3 It's time for change

The European Union has sustainable development policies, but while the European strategy agreed in Lisbon (2000) and Gothenburg (2001) has the potential to achieve significant results, so far European leaders have failed to implement it correctly. Ralph Hallo (EEB) explained some of the main concerns, such as politicians increasingly propagating principles that are opposed to the principle of balance between social, environmental and economic factors: *“Competitiveness” is their holy mantra, the interest that should prevail above all others.*

It is therefore time for a change, and the coming years offer many opportunities to influence European policy on sustainable development. According to Fintan Farrell (EAPN), *‘Spring Summits are important dates in the process of achieving Sustainable Development in*

that they hold Heads of government accountable with regard to their past promises to achieve sustainable development, including eliminating poverty and social exclusion. This holds true for the Spring Summit held in Brussels in March 2004 as well as the Spring Summit to be held in 2005.

The coming changes in the EU are important to bear in mind: Ten new Member States will join the European Union this May; in June, citizens of the old and new Member States will elect their Members of European Parliament, and on 1 November, the current European Commission will be replaced by a new, enlarged one.

Over both these years, the current and the new European Commission will work on two important review processes:

- Between the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, the new European Commission will present its review of the European *Sustainable Development Strategy*.
- In 2005, the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy will take place.

Discussions on the European Constitution will also help to define the direction of change. *‘The draft Constitution sets out clearly what kind of society we think the EU ought to be,’ Proinsias de Rossa, Irish MEP, declared ‘It is very clearly laid down that we want a European society based on solidarity, on equality, on the notion of eliminating poverty, and on sustainable development.’*



4 The Manifesto for Investing for a Sustainable Future

The EU and its Member States have committed themselves time and again to the goal of sustainable development and the building of sustainable societies. Now, for the EEB, the ETUC, and the Social Platform, the time has come to ensure that public and private money really is directed toward sustainable goods and services. In their joint Manifesto *‘Investing for a Sustainable Future’*, they present horizontal demands that touch on a range of issues (see below), with detailed proposals in key areas, namely, housing and transport, to achieve the goals of sustainable development (see Chapter 5).



A few examples of the horizontal demands at the heart of the three organisations’ Manifesto :

- The Stability and Growth Pact must be intelligently reformed to support the Lisbon–Gothenburg sustainable development objectives, and thus to encourage long-term public investment to bring about sustainable development.

According to Simon Wilson from the Social Platform, *‘the Stability and Growth Pact is a classic example of the EU focusing on very narrow economic targets without considering the fine words we heard in Lisbon and Gothenburg about achieving sustainability.’* There is a structural problem with this Pact, where targets are adopted in an inflexible manner and without considering the need to also achieve other strategic goals that the EU has set itself – such as promoting sustainable development. John Monks from the ETUC argued that *‘Member States should not justify the lack of public action by taking refuge behind the Stability and Growth Pact.’*

€ 800 billion at our disposal

The European Parliament and the EU’s Council of Ministers have agreed on a legislative package which simplifies and modernises the EU Public Procurement Directives. NGOs and trade unions are happy that the adopted rules allow authorities to demand specific environmentally-friendly production methods, such as organic production for food for schools, or to set accessibility criteria for the construction of public buildings to allow people with disabilities to access them.

- Social and environmental factors must be given a prominent place in public procurement decisions, and member states must take measures to encourage local authorities to do this;

About 15 to 16 % of the European GDP – that is about € 800 billion – is spent annually by the 15 Member States and the European Commission on public procurement contracts. Karola Taschner (EEB) highlighted that this represents an excellent opportunity to promote investment in sustainable development: *‘We have to make our authorities aware of the fact that this money has to be spent in a way that is beneficial to the citizens’*. Simon Wilson (Social Platform) also stressed the importance of public procurement because *‘all too often, public authorities are scared when engaging in spending, because they believe they can only consider economic factors’*

But there is more to consider: the Manifesto argues that there is a strong need for a **Sustainability Impact Assessment of the EU budget** to ensure

that the EU’s own funds are invested in support of social and environmental goals. Furthermore, under the Lisbon-Gothenburg process, Member States should draw up annual **Sustainable Investment Plans** to assess their national investment and financial assistance programmes. Based on these national plans and assessments, the European Commission should present annual reports to the European Council Spring Summits for discussion. Simon Wilson (Social Platform) believes *‘This is important in order to exchange best practice between Member States.’* And last but not least, the **Broad Economic Policy Guidelines** (which serve as the main instrument under the Lisbon process to ensure the co-ordination of economic policies between the Member States) should be amended to promote sustainable investment. These Guidelines should not be underestimated, as if Member State policies are not consistent with those guidelines, the European Council has the power to make recommendations on policy changes. That means that *‘the guidelines put limits on the autonomy of Member States.’*

The Manifesto – a first step

Dirk Jarré from the Social Platform emphasised that ‘the Manifesto is the first part of a long journey’, and the conference discussed ways in which the Manifesto’s demands could be developed in future. For example, Bernard Rousselet (CFDT) wondered how the private sector can be forced to commit itself to sustainable investment. Ui Ghiollagain (Women in the Home, WITH) further pointed out that ‘we can’t achieve sustainable housing until we consider sustainability in terms of family structures and in terms of our caring work and our ageing’.



5 The political debate – three partners present the campaign's demands

Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, President of the European Council, was present on the second day of the conference to listen and respond to the three organisations' presentation of the joint campaign and Manifesto. Representatives of the three organisations outlined the importance of the campaign for their sector and highlighted the main demands on the EU and Member States.

5.1 The environmental NGOs

Environmentalists received the European Commission's Spring Report 2004 and its Annual Environmental Policy Review with disappointment. They criticised its emphasis on competitiveness, which, according to Ralph Hallo, President of the EEB, is a narrow-minded approach to investment. He also emphasised that environmentalists should not equate sustainable development with environmental policy. *'We are in favour of – to speak in terms of the Lisbon Strategy – resource-efficiency with high*

standards of living, good public health, strong cohesive social inclusion and a high quality environment.'

If Europe wants to achieve goals, then it requires more than rhetoric. 'Investing in concrete projects, but also political leadership in terms of taking the necessary measures to reinforce what is positive for sustainable development and also taking away what blocks it.' Our proposals on public investment and transportation and housing should be applied and implemented¹. 'We are talking about saving money and reducing fuel bills, we are talking about improving comfort, warmer and more comfortable houses; we are talking about improved public transport services, less traffic congestion.' Ralph Hallo presented three more suggestions:

1. Make public procurement work in favour of sustainable development². *'A powerful way to promote environmental technologies would be to create government demand by public procurement.'*

2. Reform subsidies that currently work against sustainable development. On the Spring Summit 2003, the European Council urged the Council on Economics and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) to *'encourage the reform of subsidies that have considerable negative effects on the environment and that are incompatible with sustainable development.'* However, according to Ralph Hallo from the EEB, as yet, this demand has not been implemented. If the European Council would take itself seriously, it should *'speed up the process and have ECOFIN turn in a report that can be used for the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005.'*

3. Getting the prices right. At the European Council meeting in Gothenburg in 2001, an agreement was reached to adapt prices to reflect the real cost in environmental terms of economic activities.

Ralph Hallo's full speech is available at www.eeb.org

¹ See Chapter 4

5.2 The social NGOs

Dirk Jarré from the Social Platform argued in his speech to the Taoiseach that the EU and Member States' commitment to sustainable development must be 'backed up with the creative and intelligent use of resources, which can allow it to become a reality.' With regard to best practice, he emphasised, 'we are not asking for huge pots of money to be produced where they don't exist. Our demands do not necessarily need more money – rather, they require better targeting of money, which is mostly already spent.'

Dirk Jarré gave politicians at EU and national level two pieces of advice:

- They must ensure that their own funds are invested to support social and environmental goals.
- They should also create a legislative environment which encourages all actors to use their money in ways in which it will support the creation of a sustainable society.

He stressed in his speech that sustainable development is a holistic concept. *'The joining of forces between social NGOs, environmental NGOs and trade unions in this campaign is symbolic of its many-sided nature and the interdependence of the policy areas.'*

Sustainable development thus requires horizontal policy-making, as well as good governance, including strong components of participation. 'Social NGOs have long argued that policies can only be sustainable when they are developed in consultation with all stakeholders, including civil society.'

Dirk Jarré's full speech is available at www.socialplatform.org

On the previous conference day, Fintan Farrell from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) went into more depth regarding the specific concerns of the social sector. He referred to the draft *Joint Report on Social Inclusion*,³ which highlights six priority areas for action to advance the social inclusion goals of the Lisbon process. However, the Commission's Spring Report 2004 does not refer to

these priorities, despite the fact that eradicating poverty and social exclusion, and creating greater social cohesion, are key aims of the Lisbon strategy.

The numbers speak for themselves. About 55 million people in the 15 current Member States face poverty and social exclusion. Five million of them are unemployed, and 11.5 million of them face poverty and exclusion despite the fact that they are in work. So, as Fintan Farrell, stressed, *'it is not just a question of having a job, it is also a question of the quality of jobs.'* Farrell, as well as trade union representatives, emphasised that reforms must not underestimate the importance of the quality of jobs, as well as of ensuring adequate levels of social protection and health care. There is a huge risk of more people falling into poverty and exclusion *'if politicians do not commit to a high level of social protection,'* Farrell commented.

5.3 The trade unions

John Monks, General Secretary of ETUC, emphasised that *'public investment in sustainable development is clearly needed,'* because private investment does not fill the gap from cuts in public financing. Monks added that the slowdown in public and private investment is all the more worrying in that it is occurring at the expense of priority areas identified in connection with the Lisbon Strategy, especially the knowledge sector including research, education and training. But *'if the EU is to make headway on its priorities, it cannot bank on 'opportunities' arising externally, such as the recovery of the US economy or the accession of the new Member States. We need growth 'Made in Europe'.'*

Monks added that *'in the EU, there is no integration strategy to ensure that advances made on the economic and environmental fronts become vehicles for progress in the social and job sectors and vice versa.'* Such an integration strategy is important, because at the moment, the liberalisation of sectors such as the gas and electricity sectors will not only be

extremely costly in terms of jobs, but they are also failing to yield tangible results for the environment. *'And if we want to promote sustainable growth that is based on a more cohesive economy, featuring high-quality jobs and treating our natural resources more sparingly, we must give ourselves the means to achieve that growth.'* This requires:

- the inclusion of environmental issues in the European Employment Strategy and in national strategies for employment,
- a review of the Structural Funds and other support measures, to ensure that the environmental dimension is treated as a pivotal element along with employment considerations;
- an integrated approach to research and development at European level; and
- the inclusion of sustainable development in the Industrial Policy Action Plan, which the Commission is due to present in March 2004, and especially in any sectoral action plans.

John Monks further summarised: *'We need to identify specific implications for work and the environment, resulting from a whole range of changes generated during the transition to an economy that makes less intensive use of our natural resources. We also need to draw up strategies to organise these changes.'*

John Monks' full speech is available at www.etuc.org

5.4 Bertie Ahern's response

In response, Mr Ahern said that the primary focus of the Irish Presidency would be sustainable growth and high quality employment. *'Perhaps the greatest challenge facing Europe right now is the need to deliver more and better jobs.'* To achieve this, he said that investments in both physical and human capital would be crucial in supporting higher rates of growth across the EU economy.

Ahern further said that *'I welcome the contribution made to the process by this conference.'* Investing in sustainable development *'is a theme which Ireland can fully subscribe to.'* The enlarged European Union should be a dynamic economic force that drives sustainable development and works effectively for all of its citizens. *'This can best be done by promoting sustainable growth and development.'* Ahern referred to the Lisbon Agenda, which he says forces policy makers to take into account interactions between economic and social policies as well as to look at the long-term sustainability of those policies.

Bertie Ahern added that modern economic policies have to take into account environmental considerations. *'Clean technologies, for instance, are a growth area that can increase employment, support innovation and improve competitiveness, while securing consumer confidence and support.'* The Irish presidency has therefore decided to advance the Environmental Technologies Action Plan, which was published in January 2004 by the European Commission. He said, *'environmental policies (...) should not hamper economic progress, on the contrary, they can balance and support it and thereby contribute to growth and job creation.'*

Prudent investment in infrastructure, he said, is also an essential requirement for sustainable development. *'We recognise that nationally and across Europe, efficient and effective transport systems are needed to underpin competitiveness.'* Transport also makes an important contribution to social development in terms of promoting regional balance, social inclusion and sustainable development.

5.5 Can we be optimistic?

There is a lot of scepticism about how far European and national policies will start to take the environmental and social dimension of sustainable development into account, as promises have seen little in the way of implementation so far. The European Commission's Spring Report 2004 demonstrates the lack of political will in this regard, containing, as Claire Roumet of the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS) stated, *'only three paragraphs on social cohesion and one page on progress made on environmental issues.'* Simon Wilson from the Social Platform added that *'Too often, we have seen at Spring Summits that Heads of States and Governments have made promises, passed resolutions, and agreed on guidelines, but we have seen too little focus on effective implementation of these demands.'*

Proinsias de Rossa MEP agreed that implementation is a problem - *'As a politician, I always have to check the reality against the rhetoric.'* De Rossa referred to a critical draft Parliamentary Resolution to the Spring

Summit⁴, which *'stresses the disconnection between the competitiveness goal of the Lisbon agenda and the ideas from the Gothenburg Council.'*

Catherine Day (Director General of the Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission), pointed to the fact that *'All of us have to learn how to work horizontally in the future'* though she believed that the Commission had improved its ways of working since 2000 and 2001, when the Lisbon-Gothenburg process started. There is still a lot of scope for improvement; the Spring Summits of the European Council, for example, have become too ritualistic, and *'we have to improve our ability to work with long-term issues.'* She admitted that Europe is not succeeding in dealing with unsustainable trends. *'All of our reports show: progress is limited and we are not on track for sustainable development.'* Day added that *'Looking at the current political debate on competitiveness, there is also a code for rolling back the EU's social and environmental model.'*

'You have not given us a rosy picture,' replied Hans Bruyninckx from Bond Beter Leefmilieu (BBL), the Flemish environmental umbrella organisation. *'You have spoken about lack of political commitment, too much short-term planning, we are bureaucratically organised, there is a huge implementation gap. It's the same as 50 years ago.'*

'But sustainability is a process,' Catherine Day replied and added that *'the EU has the right framework but not yet the right balance.'* Day's comments echoed those of Martin Cullen, Irish Minister for Environment and Local Government: *'I think in the last decade, sustainable development has moved from a pioneering aspiration to the centre of the political debate in Europe.'* He emphasised *'that Environment Ministers do sit down and take these issues extremely seriously.'* He said that the real challenge at the moment is to move sustainable development from an aspiration to actual practical implementation.

⁴ Draft Resolution of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee to the Spring Summit 2004.

Catherine Day gave an example of what one of the key issues for the European Commission should be, namely, combatting climate change. *'We would like to see the theme of dealing with climate change as one of the things running through the tapestry of the future structural funds. And if it was, then tackling some of the transport problems and some of the housing problems – the energy efficiency of housing – that would come very naturally into play.'*

Werner Schneider from the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) stressed that *'we have to define what our qualitative objectives are when we talk about growth.'* He believed that we can't expect that governments will change overnight. *'We have to develop instruments such as guidelines, directives and projects, to show how we can provide incentives and manage policies in the right direction towards a sustainable future. We have to define where we wish to go in future.'*

5.6 Getting people involved

The key question for many speakers was how to engage the public in the question of sustainable development and the kind of society we want to live in. The campaign is based on the understanding that governments have a lead role to play in changing the attitudes and behaviour of their citizens – and that it is possible to achieve a lot if there is some political will.

However, there was some debate about who should take responsibility for changing practices. Martin Cullen (Irish Minister of Environment and Local Government) noted that *'We are talking about public transport as a key part of the whole transport system. If everyone would stop driving their children to school on a daily basis that would help a lot.'* Mary Kelly from the Irish National Women's Council, replied: *'The Minister reminded us of the very critical importance of buying in from the bottom-up. . . we would probably be saying to the Minister that we also insist buying in from the top-down.'*

According to Catherine Day (DG Environment), there is hope. *'Most European citizens want to enjoy growth and rising living standards, but not at any price. They want good social policies, high level of environmental protection – and expect the public authorities to deliver that.'* Ralph Hallo (EEB) is also convinced that *'inside civil society, there is a strong and growing awareness that sustainable development is of interest to all of us, and that it can bring together environmental, social and economic aims and demands in a concrete and positive way.'*



6 From best practice to common practice

In the manifesto, the three organisations give their definition of what it means to invest in housing and transport in a sustainable manner. With regard to housing, it implies creating access to housing for all, which is in good condition, secure and healthy, generates high quality employment and is environmentally sound. Sustainable transport implies ensuring clean, accessible, safe and integrated transport systems, based on quality jobs.

‘There are a lot of good examples of sustainable development best practice in Europe.’ This was emphasised by Maria Buitenkamp, Ecostrategy, who has compiled examples of best practice in housing and transport projects from different parts of Europe in the brochure ‘Investing for a Sustainable Future: from best practice to common practice’, published before the conference by EEB, ETUC and the Social Platform⁵. Some of the examples were presented during the conference.

⁵ This brochure can be downloaded from the websites of the Social Platform (<http://www.socialplatform.org>), the EEB (<http://www.eeb.org>), and the ETUC (<http://www.etuc.org>).

6.1 Affordable and sustainable housing

At the conference, three best practice examples on housing from Northern Ireland, Germany and France were presented and discussed.

Against fuel poverty in Northern Ireland

'Fuel poverty is defined as a condition where householders need to spend more than 10% of their income to heat their home to an adequate standard,' explained Noel Rice from Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The main causes for high spending are energy inefficiency within the dwelling, high fuel prices, and low income. Fuel poverty can be a huge problem: In Northern Ireland, about 200,000 households – that is about one third of all households – are in, or at risk of, fuel poverty. To improve the situation, the government of Northern Ireland developed a Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001 and invested €57 million (£41 million) per annum in improving energy efficiency of dwellings.

German alliance for work and environment

'If there is political will, we are able to mobilise resources to bring the three dimensions – economic, ecological and social – together.' That is the belief of Werner Schneider from the German Trade Union Confederation DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund). Here, he referred to the *Alliance for Work and Environment*, which was implemented by a broad coalition of government, industry, trade unions and environmental NGOs, in order to retrofit existing buildings to reduce energy consumption, thereby creating jobs in the construction, environmental products and technologies, research and consultancy sectors. The *Alliance* has proven to be successful, showing that energy needs can be significantly reduced without major re-development, thus lowering CO²-emissions and reducing heating bills. According to Werner Schneider, DGB, *'That is a pay-off on the social and economic scale generated from ecological investment.'* He would like the Irish Presidency to draw on the German success story and spread it to other EU countries.

Sustainable housing in France

'Sustainable construction of houses means preventing expense later on,' explained Michel Gilbert from OPAC 38, the biggest council housing provider in the Isère department of the Rhône-Alpes region, France. One of the main objectives of OPAC 38's sustainability policy is to control the costs to tenants in rent and service charges, partly by lowering energy use. Several OPAC 38 projects thus deliver energy savings and switch from non-renewable to renewable energy sources, with the main financial support provided by the European Commission and the French government. The projects have been successful, for example retrofitting with solar and photovoltaic panels has meant that 25% of the necessary energy for domestic hot water is supplied by solar energy, and savings for each tenant of almost €100 per year on their energy bills. Four highly qualified jobs were created to manage the projects, and an internal training scheme developed on 'Environment, Energy and Social Housing' for construction programme managers, agency managers and rent department managers.

6.2 Sustainable transport – myths, facts, and examples

During the conference, analysis, best practice examples and ideas for new tools in the area of sustainable transport were presented and discussed.

Myths and facts about sustainable transport

Transport has an impact on quality of life in different ways. Ton Sledsens from Transport & Environment (T&E) has analysed the potential negative side effects of unsustainable transport:

- On social development. The current trend in the EU is that compared to 20 years ago, families have to spend more than 50% extra on their household budget on transport. In some cities and areas people face social exclusion because they do not have access to cars and there is no public transport, or because areas are split apart by infrastructure. Therefore, *'policy should not focus on mobility but on accessibility. Most people don't like to use a lot of time and mobility to access*

the products, the services and activities they want.'

The concentration of hospitals in particular areas or out-of-town stores leads to 'accessibility poverty', especially for the under-privileged.

- On the environment. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) has analysed 27 environmental indicators, and the results are disheartening. Ton Sledsens informed participants that *'None of the indicators have improved.'* For instance, the transport sector actually emits more than 20% more carbon dioxide than in 1990. This is set to rise unless sufficient measures are taken to stop it.
- On the economy: *'Many studies have shown that it is no longer valid to say that building infrastructure always generates positive benefits for the economy,'* Sledsens pointed out. The relationship between transport and society is a complex one. For instance, building a new road in order to develop a depressed area could worsen the situation, as *'Local companies could be hurt because they cannot compete with the central economy.'*

The London congestion charge

Since 17 February 2003, drivers have to pay a 'congestion charge' of £5 per day (about €7.50) if they wish to drive into central London between 07.00 and 18.30. The congestion charge has already proven successful, said Richard Bourn from Transport 2000 (the UK national environmental transport campaign). Traffic levels inside the zone have dropped by 16%, and many car users have switched to public transport. Two main factors have led to general public acceptance of the charge. Firstly, the traffic situation in London was extremely bad, with London described as the 6th most congested city in the world. Secondly, there was extensive consultation before the scheme's introduction, where it was clearly outlined what the generated revenue would be used for – especially the bus system and road safety measures.

The 'collective transport voucher'

– the role of the private sector

Giuseppe d'Ercole, CISL Italian Trade Union, presented a proposal supported by all trade unions in Italy - the creation of a 'public transport voucher' based on the principal of the 'meal voucher'. The idea is to make employers contribute to their employees' costs of transport through the provision of vouchers valid for all types of collective transport systems, including taxis. This would increase resources and demand for public transport services, while at the same time providing economic and tax advantages for companies and workers. Giuseppe d'Ercole explained, *'this initiative would strengthen the Italian legislation that makes it mandatory for companies, public and private, with more than 300 employees, to draw on mobility plans.'*

Several participants had already stressed that sustainable transport should not be the sole responsibility of the public sector – for example, mobility plans in companies are a very promising tool to promote sustainable transport. Jehan Decrop from the Belgium Christian Trade Union ACV-CSC explained that 'In Belgium, big companies already have to carry out a mobility plan to have a good sustainable development profile for its employees, and soon also for the goods the company deals with. And trade unions play an important role in promoting and implementing these plans.'

6.3 The Irish situation – ‘not yet win-win-win’

Over the last few years, Ireland has received significant support from EU Structural Funds, which has contributed to the fast growth of the Irish economy. Martin Cullen, Irish Minister of Environment and Local Government, stated: *‘We brought the unemployment rate from 18 % down to 4 %.’* Unfortunately, there are side effects to this economic growth:

- *‘Car dependency in Ireland is 30 % higher than in the USA and appears to be the highest in the world,’* said Frank Corcoran from An Taisce (National Fund Trust for Ireland), and Irish cars travel relatively high distances each year compared with other countries. This trend has accelerated in recent years as a result of a lack of affordable housing near people’s place of work, particularly in the Dublin region. This has resulted in people buying houses up to fifty miles outside of Dublin, in towns that lack public transport infrastructure.

- *‘Whereas in the past in Ireland, most workers could aspire to own homes, this has now changed as a result of house price inflation exceeding wage increases,’* said Frank Corcoran, An Taisce. The cost of living as a whole is so high nowadays, that families can only afford to have children if both parents continue in full-time work. For Corcoran, however, *‘shelter is a basic human right, the provision of affordable housing cannot be left entirely to the vagaries of the market.’*

Martin Cullen, the Irish Minister of Environment and Local Government, acknowledged that there is a need for improvement. *‘In Ireland, an efficient and effective transport system is needed to underpin our economy and our competitiveness. Despite significant capital investment in infrastructure we are still in deficit in terms of transport infrastructure.’* From his point of view, an efficient and effective transport system would also contribute to social development, particularly in promoting regional balance and social inclusion.



7 Preparations for the campaign in 2004 and 2005

Many participants were enthusiastic about the campaign. As one participant argued, *'we have to get maximum support for the Manifesto, because this is the best way to exert political pressure.'*

In order to lead a successful campaign, as Joël Decaillon (ETUC) argued, the three organisations have to work at European as well as at national level: *'We have to bring our ideas to the European Commission, the European Parliament, and we also have to amplify our activities to convince all national governments, for instance with joint letters, to confirm our commitment to this process.'* Dirk Jarré (Social Platform) highlighted the importance of local level action: *'What we have learned from the environmental movement is to think globally and to act on a local level - the same is true for investing in sustainable development.'*

Mauro Albrizio (Legambiente) touched on the heart of the issue when he argued that 'We will be lost if we are not able to bring the ideas to the attention of the decision-makers at national, regional and local level.' He added: 'We need an EU political climate which favours sustainable investment because everywhere we go we are being told that 'We have European constraints'.

Raising awareness about sustainable development

A lot of work still has to be done to get people engaged and generate understanding of the concept of sustainable development. In some places, it is difficult to attract trade unions and social organisations to get involved in campaigns for sustainable development; as Krzysztof Kaminieck from the Institute for Sustainable Development in Poland noted *'they do not understand what we want to achieve and how we are proceeding – that is a*

problem in promoting our Manifesto.' Some people do not see the relevance of the sustainable development debate to their lives. Ralph Hallo (EEB) also noted that the concept of sustainable development is not something, *'that the ordinary citizen understands very well.'*

Some people are also worried about the effects of pursuing a more sustainable path to development, for example on economic growth or competitiveness. However, the effects of investing in real sustainable development are more complex, as Giuseppe d'Ercole (CISL, Italian trade union) pointed out - *'Sustainable development means a change of development. Some sectors will lose out, lose jobs, whereas other sectors will win and get more jobs.'* He recommended that social aspects of environmental measures, such as national climate change programmes, should be fully addressed, and that workers' consultation on these issues should be

strengthened. Otherwise, *'there will be resistance from those who will lose.'*

In addition, Michel Gibert from OPAC 38 pointed to one international dimension of sustainable development: *'In future, emerging states will be eager to know how we handle the situation in terms of structures, products, waste and know-how.'* There is a need for setting up processes that can meet their need for information.

Clear messages and exchanging good practice

To successfully promote the campaign – and the evolution of a sustainable society as a whole – the campaign needs to work hard to convey its message. It needs to build on the momentum reached at this conference and must continue getting more support around Europe, exerting political pressure and documenting good practice.

Many possible ways of promoting the Manifesto were discussed. Angelo Grasso (CECODHAS) thought that clear objectives would be helpful. He asked: *'Would it be too much to have the objective of an improvement of 50% of energy saving in buildings within 20 years?'* John Evans from the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) stressed that the message has to be kept simple: *'My experience with politicians and the media is that you need to be very clear.'*

There is also need for better exchange of information and best practice. Maria Buitenkamp, Ecostrategy, pointed out that *'There is a lack of access to good information where people describe in a complete and comparable way how their best practices are working.'* She asked for more initiative to be taken by the projects, as *'it is difficult to access information on many projects.'* Noel Rice (Northern Ireland Housing Executive) has learned from the Fuel Poverty Strategy⁶ that there can be a multi-

plying effect, in that *'if a local authority initiative receives good publicity, other local authorities also become interested.'*

Investing in sustainable development offers many solutions. As Frank Corcoran, An Taisce (National Fund Trust for Ireland) said: *'investing in sustainable housing and transport is a win-win-win-situation; from an economic point of view, it would make the economy less car-dependent; it would make social sense – it promotes social inclusion; and it would be logical from an environmental point of view.'* However, there are not always win-win-situations, as John Hontelez (EEB) pointed out: *'We simply have to accept that on the way to a sustainable society some sectors are losing out, others are winning.'* Therefore, it is not always easy to lobby for sustainable investment, *'but concerning the housing and transport sector, there can be economic, social and environmental progress at the same time.'*

Possible actions at European level and...

For a successful campaign, it is necessary to lobby directly at European level. For example, Fintan Farrell (EAPN) asked for the structural funds to be opened for investing in housing and sustainable transport. Eero Yrjö-Koskinen from Suomen Luonnonsuojeluliitto Ry (Finnish Association for Nature Conservation) argued that there should be a sustainability impact assessment on all EU expenditure. Koskinen conceded that *'that sounds demanding, and I am not sure whether the European Commission could cope with that.'*, and thus recommended focusing on the main problem areas in EU policies, such as the Common Agriculture Policy, transport policy, and Structural Funds, or demanding *'that a certain percentage of each budget line should be dedicated for that purpose.'*

... continuing to contribute to the political process

Dirk Jarré (Social Platform) recommended that we learn from past experiences: *'Often, we let all the politicians off the hook, because we do not monitor their actions.'* He suggested that the campaign could:

- identify simple but precise indicators for sustainable policies and developments which can be used at local level;
- develop a strategy for monitoring the development and implementation of sustainable policies.

Mauro Albrizio (Legambiente) agreed with Joël Decaillon (ETUC) that during the election campaign for the European Parliament as well as during the hearings of the new Commissioners, the three organisations should try to ensure that sustainable development becomes one of the key issues.

Ernst Ehnmark, member of the Workers Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), also invited the three organisations to contribute to the EESC's opinion on the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Catherine Day (DG Environment), urged the campaign to *'Be ready to participate fully'* in the Commission's consultation on the review of the Strategy, *'so that we can really have a good basis for the new Commission to come forward with its views on the future Sustainable Development Strategy for Europe.'*

Werner Schneider from the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund DGB (German Trade Union Confederation), noted that, *'what we can do is to point out guidelines, directives, projects, and incentives, which lead us in the right direction towards a sustainable future.'*



Annex I : The Framework

The Lisbon Process: Four years ago, at the Lisbon European Council held on 23 and 24 April 2000, Heads of State and Governments committed themselves to the goal of achieving a competitive economy, based upon full employment and social cohesion. By 2010, the European Union should be *'the most dynamic, competitive, sustainable knowledge-based economy, enjoying full employment and strengthened economic and social cohesion.'* These are the so-called Lisbon goals.

The Gothenburg Process: The Lisbon Agenda had neglected the environmental dimension of sustainable development. This was corrected one year later, at the Gothenburg European Council on 15 and 16 June 2001, where Heads of States and Government agreed on the need for a **strategy for sustainable development** *'to meet the needs of the present generation without comprising those of future generations.'* They confirmed that this *'requires dealing with economic, social and environmental policies in a mutually reinforcing way.'* For this Gothenburg strategy, Heads of States and Government had taken into account the European Commission's **Consultation Paper for the preparation a European Union strategy for Sustainable Development** (SEC(2001)517).

From 2002 onwards, during the annual **Spring European Summits**, the European Council discusses the progress of the **Lisbon-Gothenburg-process**.

Next time, EU leaders will be gathering in Brussels on 25 and 26 March 2004. At this meeting, they will try to assess the extent to which the economic, social and environmental policies have achieved the goals the EU has set itself. The European Commission prepares these Spring Summits in publishing the **Report from the Commission to the Spring European Council** at the beginning of each year. The Commission report analyses to which extent sustainable development objectives have been achieved (see COM(2004)29).

Information and papers can be downloaded from the European Commission's website http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_eu.html.

A short history of sustainable development

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development issued the report Our common future (the so-called Brundtland Report), which was the start of a broader understanding of the concept of sustainable development. Five years later, sustainable development became the main topic on the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainability and Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, governments of almost all countries confirmed the ambitious goal of achieving sustainable development world-wide, based on three dimensions: the economic, the environmental and the social one.



Annex II : Six priorities for social inclusion

In its Joint Report on Social Inclusion (COM(2003)773), the European Commission has made six recommendations:

- Promoting investment in and tailoring of active labour market measures to meet the needs of those who have the greatest difficulties in accessing employment;
- Ensuring that social protection schemes are adequate and accessible for all and that they provide effective work incentives for those who can work;
- Increasing the access of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of social exclusion to decent housing, quality health and lifelong learning opportunities;
- Implementing a concerted effort to prevent early school leaving and to promote smooth transition from school to work;
- Developing a focus on ending child poverty as a key step to stop the intergenerational inheritance of poverty;
- Initiating a drive to reduce poverty and social exclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

You can access the **Joint Report on Social Inclusion** on the Commission's website, at http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/joint_rep_en.htm



Annex III : Useful Links

Organisations

Social Platform

www.socialplatform.org

European Environmental Bureau

www.etuc.org

European Trade Union Confederation

www.eeb.org

European Liaison Committee on Social Housing

www.cecodhas.org

Transport and Environment

www.t-e.nu

EU websites

EU portal

www.europa.eu.int

EU Sustainable Development Strategy

http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/strategy_en.htm

Lisbon Strategy

http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html

Sustainable Development

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

www.iclei.org/egpis

European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign
and European Sustainable Cities Project:

www.sustainable-cities.org

Best Practices for Human Settlements Database

www.bestpractices.org

United Nations Human Settlement Programme

www.unhabitat.org

Eurocities

www.eurocities.org

Sustainability Works (Sustainable Housing)

www.sustainabilityworks.org.uk

BedZed Housing Development

www.zedfactory.com

Described project examples

1. Renovating Buildings for Jobs and the Environment, Germany

www.dgb.de

2. Reducing Fuel Poverty and Improving
the Environment, Northern Ireland

www.nihe.gov.uk, www.nea.org.uk

3. Urban Regeneration, Torino, Italy

www.comune.torino.it/portapalazzo

www.comune.torino.it/urban2/content/index.htm

www.atc.torino.it/frame.htm

4. Sustainable Social Housing, France

www.opac38.fr

5. Congestion Charging, London, UK

www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/cc_factsheet.shtml

www.cclondon.com

6. Moving Freight from Road to Rail, Switzerland

www.are.admin.ch

7. Spatial planning for Sustainable Transport, Netherlands

www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl, www.novem.org



Annex IV: List of participants

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