

Moreover, this increased e-mail traffic requires rapid, appropriate action if we are to respect the 'netiquette' for processing e-mail requests: making services providing specific information take responsibility, and setting up contact teams covering all fields and the full range of languages, including certain central and eastern European languages.

3.5. Visits

The ESC, which has a team of speakers backed up by a number of members, receives around 8 000 visitors a year, who are

duly briefed about institutional activities, the Committee's role in Community decision-making, etc.;

It is essential that speakers from other institutions proclaim the same consensual message, focusing on cooperation between the institutions in the interest of European construction which, when clearly and simply explained, is transparent, democratic and solid. It is sometimes necessary for these speakers to explain the very essence of the ESC. Do we have a training course for these speakers?

Cooperation with the Commission and with the EUVP is nevertheless very good and should be stepped up.

Brussels, 29 November 2001.

The President

of the Economic and Social Committee

Göke FRERICHS

Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on 'A sustainable Europe for a Better World'

(2002/C 48/26)

On 31 May 2001 the Economic and Social Committee decided, in accordance with Rules 11(4), 19(1) and 23(3) of its Rules of Procedure, to draw up an opinion on 'A sustainable Europe for a Better World'.

The Sub-Committee 'Sustainable Europe', which was responsible for the preparatory work, adopted its opinion on 30 October 2001. The rapporteur was Mr Ehnmark, the co-rapporteur Mr Ribbe.

At its 386th plenary session (meeting of 29 November 2001) the Economic and Social Committee adopted unanimously the following opinion.

1. Call to the Laeken Council

1.1. The Economic and Social Committee welcomes the Belgian Presidency's initiative to prepare a Declaration on the Future of Europe to be adopted at the Laeken European Council. This gives a unique opportunity to present fundamental views on the future of Europe, its aims and purposes, at an early stage in the forthcoming wide public debate.

1.2. The Gothenburg European Summit took the far-reaching decision to set sustainable development as an overrid-

ing objective for the Union. With that decision, the Summit opened up a new vision for the future of Europe.

1.3. The intentions for the Laeken Declaration make it a special occasion to sharpen the vision of sustainable development as a major task for the European Union. Now is the time to make clear the full scope of the challenge and opportunity for the Union of this new project and to set it clearly in the midst of the debate on the future of Europe. Sustainable

development should be there, at the very heart of the debate on the kind of Europe we want.

1.4. In its work this year, the ESC has paid particular attention to the global importance of sustainable development and to the consequences of the Gothenburg Summit decision. In this second Opinion on sustainable development, the ESC focuses on how to take this vision forward, making it more operational with wider public involvement.

1.5. Sustainable development is a vision with the ambition to shape good sustained living conditions for all citizens, not in terms of economic welfare alone but of social, cultural and environmental well-being too. Good quality of life does not depend solely on economic resources but is the product of many interacting factors, valued over time.

1.6. Having been solemnly declared a long-term overarching EU policy, sustainable development is now a new vision for Europe. It brings a radical integrated view of how to shape policies for the common good in a shared future, accentuating the need for policies to be coordinated and coherent.

1.7. Sustainable development such as this impinges on all activities of the Union and its member States, opening the way for its citizens to be closer to the Union and its policies.

1.8. As a new vision, it challenges the EU to show how well it can reach out to new generations and to other parts of the world. An effort of solidarity and responsibility such as this can however draw strength from the EU's founding inspiration, its will to combine efforts and thus face and resolve in a mutually reinforcing way the conflicts which inevitably arise in pursuit of an ambitious and wide-ranging objective like this.

1.9. Sustainable development focuses on three major policy sectors — economic, social and environmental — setting a clear ambition to combine objectives and actions in all three for the end overall of shaping a sustainable society. Environmental policy is thus a priority equal with economic and social policy. The three policy sectors interact and have to do so on a broad scale. Hence the need for the EU to take the lead as decided by the Heads of Government at Gothenburg, sending an important message to the citizens of the Union and ultimately to the whole world

1.10. *Practical Policies for People*

1.10.1. Sustainable development is a radical approach to the kind of Europe we want, leading to substantial changes in the lives and behaviour of citizens. Every-day life will be affected as by no other policy vision. The ensuing challenges to society and economic and industrial life will be formidable.

1.10.2. Since sustainable development places solidarity at the centre, this new vision for Europe in effect provides a rare opportunity for testing good governance through hard, practical work. With the formidable task of shaping a future where policy and action are made to meet the long-term priorities of its citizens, political leadership will be essential and issues of governance will need to be placed at the forefront.

1.11. Notwithstanding the long-term nature and perspectives of sustainable development, realistic and concrete operational targets must be set. Sustainable development has to be made operational through concrete projects for the Union and its member States. This is important, psychologically and politically, as it responds to every-day concerns of the Union's citizens

1.12. The new vision shows the need for a process of sustained initiative. Sustainable development is a long process, relying on sustained momentum in all spheres. The ESC highlights the knowledge dimension of sustainable development which must be backed by investments in education, life-long learning and research.

1.13. Sustainable development policies must be built from bottom up with wide public support. The national plans foreseen for sustainable development provide unique opportunities for new forms of dialogue, such as active involvement of citizens in shaping EU policies in this field backed by well-working information and consultation procedures. It is essential that the role and functions of national plans are clarified, particularly in relation to European Union strategy.

1.14. The social partners have an essential role in both supporting and monitoring the consultation processes. Without active involvement of the social partners and other non-governmental organizations, it will not be possible to launch sustainable development as a successful strategy for the future of the Union.

1.15. The Economic and Social Committee is in a unique position to monitor and support the consultation processes. The Committee represents in a very wide sense organized civil society. The Committee intends to form an active part of the consultation process.

1.16. Sustainable development is a major challenge for the Candidate Countries. The Union should from the outset engage dialogue with them to ensure their participation in common objectives and action as soon as possible. The very existence of this new vision for the European project can give new impetus to the work of transition in these countries and be a motivating force in engendering popular support for participation in the shaping of Union policies.

1.17. Sustainable development is a challenge for EU institutions, particularly as regards the need for enhanced policy coordination and coherency. All institutions will have to meet the new demands. The urgent need is for better integration of sustainable development into all policy planning and implementation. The Committee stresses the need for this and emphasizes in particular the importance of improved policy coordination in the Commission. The ESC proposes that a special body be created in the General Secretariat or on the staff of the Commission President.

1.18. The EU should move forward at the Barcelona European Council in March 2002 with clear signals on concrete steps to be taken with regard to climate protection, energy production and long-term solutions in the transport sector. It is vital that new steps are taken to restore public confidence in food.

1.19. The ESC finds it essential for the Barcelona Summit to set new objectives as well in the social and economic pillars of sustainable development. Emerging health hazards in working life must be addressed in their social, economic and environmental context. Improved quality of work is a key factor in the social part of the strategy. Public health, not least against the perspective of an ageing population, is another. A multi-disciplinary approach is difficult, but necessary.

1.20. The ESC proposes a Union-wide information campaign on the basic issues of sustainable development, involving schools and universities, work-places and libraries, NGO's and social partners.

1.21. The ESC insists on the importance of taking the key issues to the people, for discussion and consultation. The ESC proposes a prolonged consultation period in 2002, following the Barcelona European Council.

2. Background

2.1. At its plenary session in May, 2001, the ESC adopted unanimously its Opinion on the Preparation of a European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development. The core advice then from the ESC to the Gothenburg European Council was that the time available for political consideration and for achieving broad public support and understanding of concrete measures was too short and that further work was needed to provide the Council and governments with a sufficient basis for the relevant decisions.

2.2. The ESC emphasised its intention to be active in the further work both of preparation and implementation of the strategy.

2.3. The ESC welcomed the Commission's proposal that the ESC act as co-organiser of a biennial Stakeholder Forum on sustainable development.

2.4. The ESC stated moreover that it was ready to mobilise its membership for strengthening communication with grass-roots levels and to develop a Watch-dog function focusing on quality analysis of the implementation of the strategy for sustainable development.

3. The European Council in Gothenburg

3.1. The European Council in Gothenburg in June decided to follow a political course that can be seen as fairly parallel to the ESC suggestions and a result of converging policy considerations.

3.2. The essence of the Council decision can be set out in four points:

- endorsement of the necessity that the economic, social and environmental effects of all policies be examined in a coordinated way and taken into account in decision-making;
- use of a bottom-up strategy, building on national sustainable development strategies to be drawn up by Member States of the Union;
- placing emphasis on wide consultation with all relevant stakeholders and inviting Member States to establish appropriate consultative processes;

- identification of a number of objectives and measures as general guidance for future policy development in four priority areas: climate change, transport, public health and natural resources.

3.3. The Council further emphasised its intention to review progress at two meetings during the forthcoming year:

- at the Laeken summit the Council will examine Commission proposals for mechanisms to submit all major policy proposals to a sustainability impact assessment covering their potential economic, social and environmental consequences;
- at the Spring European Council in March 2002 the Council will review in a wider context progress in developing and implementing the strategy.

3.4. The Council underlined that sustainable development has the potential to unleash a new wave of technological innovation and investment, generating growth and employment. The Council invited industry to take part in the development and wider use of new environmentally friendly technologies in sectors such as energy and transport.

4. The Gothenburg European Council in perspective

4.1. The outcome of the Gothenburg European Council, given the circumstances, can only be described as measuring up to expectations. The Council launched a long-term effort for sustainable development and in so doing firmly placed sustainability as a core dimension in European cooperation. It emphasised with all due weight that sustainable development must be backed by the citizens themselves and adequate mechanisms for consultation established. Finally, the Council set out a batch of priority actions and planning requests for future action.

4.2. The call for policy coherence in support of sustainable development has thus been firmly established.

4.3. Both the Commission and Council recognise that sustainable development in the EU can only be achieved through close consultation with all parts of civil society. This will require intensive consultation and collaboration with a wide number of stakeholder groups.

4.3.1. Lack of time meant that the Gothenburg Summit was unable to adopt a series of concrete measures to implement the agreed objectives. Therefore, it is all the more important that the Commission's synthesis report, as basis for the

Barcelona European Council, be accompanied by concrete and realistic measures. This is vital for preserving broad public involvement.

4.3.2. To take one case in point, the Commission consultation paper of March 2001 mentions cutting CO₂ emissions by 70 % long term. The Committee welcomes these remarks but notes that no 'strategies' are set out to show how this sort of cutback is to be achieved.

4.3.3. A 70 % CO₂ emissions cut would inevitably make it necessary to introduce radical changes in the way we manage economic activity and our daily lives. According to the European Environment Agency the EU will find it difficult already to adhere to the Kyoto targets. What sort of strategies will then be needed to achieve much more radical long-term objectives?

4.3.4. Some people have perceived an active climate protection policy as constituting a constraint on economic competitiveness. Yet increasing energy and resource efficiency is not only right from an ecological point of view but also from an economic one: less consumption of energy means not only less greenhouse gases but also lower energy costs for industry. Thus the use of innovative and efficient technology pays off twice.

4.3.5. For the ESC, these conflicting views and unfortunate lack of consistency between aims and means explain why it is so difficult to gain credibility for giving priority to sustainable development and to engage support for this from broad groups in society.

4.4. The Gothenburg Council made clear that institutional methods will have to be set up to ensure coherency in policy. This will mean new measures within the European Institutions for cross-border and inter-sectoral coordination. The Gothenburg Council called on the General Affairs Council to coordinate the horizontal preparation of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

4.5. An important aspect of the Gothenburg decisions was that Union efforts on sustainable development be backed by national action plans, starting in Spring 2002. This recalls the Structural Funds working methods and means that all aspects given priority by the Council need to be reflected in plans based on considerations at national level. In other words, this is a way of building coherent sustainable policies from bottom up, not top down.

4.6. A final comment could be that the Gothenburg Council message was that the real work on the Sustainable Development (SD) strategy was now to begin; after all, the issues have a time horizon of 20-25 years. No one should expect a full SD strategy to appear out of a few months of public debate and political summitry.

5. Coherency in Sustainable Development (SD)

5.1. The SD strategy completes the Union's political commitment to economic and social renewal and adds a third, environmental pillar (or dimension) to the Lisbon strategy.

5.2. The ESC emphasised in its previous opinion how essential it is for actions under these three pillars to be fully coordinated. Thus environmental objectives must make reference to employment and social consequences. Likewise sustainable public finances are a prerequisite for a credible sustainable strategy in the fields of social care and social inclusion/exclusion.

5.3. The ESC recognises the difficulties in shaping adequate policy coherency between the three pillars. It is not always obvious how the three pillars interact, whether in supportive or counter-productive ways. The selection of indicators for evaluation is clearly crucial. The trouble is that indicators — as illustrated, i.a., by recent OECD analysis — usually refer to one only of the three pillars, economic, social or environmental. Indicators that make it possible to measure and analyse 'cross-pillar' connections and effects are an altogether different matter.

5.4. The 'Broad Economic Guidelines' offer an example of partial integration of sustainability in the overall analysis and recommendations. The Commission draft economic guidelines — later adopted by Council and Parliament with minor amendments — emphasise the need for sustainable public finances and include at the very end a reference to the decision by the Stockholm European Council to include sustainable development in the Lisbon strategy.

5.5. The need for sustained economic growth, high employment, robust pension systems, adequate policies for counter-acting social exclusion, new investments in research and development, new measures to provide for a sustained environmental policy — all these factors will have to be integrated as starting points in drawing up broad economic guidelines.

5.6. The social pillar is obviously a multifaceted challenge. According to the social action plan, forceful steps should be taken to minimise social exclusion and achieve more inclusion. The EU employment policy, initiated by the 1997 European Council in Luxembourg, is another key part of the social pillar. Education and training as well as life-long learning are other parts together with quality of work added by the 2001 Stockholm Summit.

5.7. It is noteworthy, however, that the Commission draft 2002 employment guidelines refer only in passing to the decisions on sustainable development. The proposal notes, i.a., that the Summit recommended that national action plans for sustainable development include the promotion of employment in the environmental field. In the actual proposed guidelines, however, there is scant reference to sustainable development.

5.8. In the social pillar, there is also a long-term issue, the European social model. This is gaining in importance in view of both enlargement and the Union's growing world-wide commitments. The European social model is often referred to without further analysis or explanation, its existence however can be taken as very obvious. It is, for instance, widely accepted that the model includes such aspects as solidarity and social security together with competitive industrial and economic growth.

5.9. The social partners must take special responsibility for deepening the analysis and bringing up to date the European Social Model.

5.10. Another key dimension of the SD strategy as seen by the ESC is cohesion in its widest sense. For the future of the European Union, maintaining and strengthening cohesion will be crucial. In the case of enlargement, this is most obvious. But cohesion is not attained by economic, social and environmental development alone. It must include as well a cultural dimension embracing shared values, cultural understanding and mutual respect for cultural diversity.

5.11. The cultural dimension of the SD strategy needs more analysis. Cultural pluralism and variety is at the heart of the Union vision. The SD strategy should take careful note of this and include action to support an emerging concept of sustained cultural variety and diversity.

5.12. For the ESC this dimension of SD strategy needs to be rated much higher. Inherited European cultural values in customs and patterns of behaviour play, directly or indirectly, a key part in the way models of cohesion evolve. Recognition and acceptance of shared cultural traditions and attitudes help cement mutual understanding and respect. A cultural dimension of sustainable development can be seen as a tool for preserving and supporting cultural pluralism.

5.13. Solidarity between the generations is at the heart of any SD definition. Consultation and other work concerning the SD strategy must therefore attract and actively involve the full range of generations. It would be particularly valuable to involve young groups (identified as under 25 years) and the somewhat older people (identified as 55+).

6. The SD strategy — an urgent start to a long journey

6.1. The debate on the Commission proposal for an SD strategy revealed a split in the perspectives chosen: either a more visionary outlook on the need to counter unsustainable trends, or a more operational emphasis on concrete actions, mainly in the environmental field. This last approach was often backed up with references to the many years passed since the Rio conference adopted the overall objective of sustainable development.

6.2. After the Gothenburg European Summit, the debate has more or less slumbered, in spite of the challenging work to put the Summit decisions into effect. Overshadowed by world events, the social partners and organized civil society as a whole await initiatives from the European institutions on how to implement the Gothenburg decisions and carry the strategy forward.

6.3. This can be a dangerous let-up in the pressure from wide groups in society for action to start shaping a more sustainable society. The ESC pointed out, in the previous opinion on the strategy, that it was urgent for the process to start and be given concrete content. The urgency is not less a half year after the Gothenburg Summit.

6.4. At the same time, it must be emphasised that the SD strategy must be developed over a long time, step by step, in

accordance with what can be sustained by peoples and governments. SD strategy is no big-bang-phenomenon. Over-ambition can be an enemy of the best intentions.

6.5. The ESC finds it important to stress this step-by-step nature of SD strategy. The European Council has the same approach, in deciding that an annual follow-up be made as part of the Lisbon strategy.

7. Identifying the critical issues in environment

7.1. The environment part of the SD strategy alone includes a number of critical issues, with wide consequences for the way citizens live their lives and society functions. The ESC finds it appropriate to present the following relevant instances.

7.2. The Council and the Commission have often pointed out that sustainable development will prompt new technologies, thereby opening new markets and paving the way for a new economy. In the field of energy-efficiency and energy-saving, the Commission has presented a number of proposals and the ESC likewise has made its comments. In this sector however the over-riding impression is that there is vast untouched potential for doing more — and for involving citizens more.

7.2.1. To engage in a sustainable manner in manufacturing or other forms of economic activity is intrinsically a more difficult proposition and requires a more intelligent approach than is the case with the short-term 'exploitation' or over-exploitation of resources. Furthermore, because of the general conditions which apply, sustainable economic activity continues to be uneconomic in many cases.

7.2.2. We recognise that our planet represents a closed system and that many stable, closed systems operate at local and regional level. We are, however, to an ever increasing extent, disrupting cycles which used to be stable, making use of the ability — previously non-existent — to over-exploit natural resources massively.

7.2.3. It is sad but true that profits have been most easily made from 'exploitation' of readily available factors such as natural resources and labour. Production according to stricter standards than legally required does not automatically lead to higher profits.

7.2.4. The fact that this is so does not imply criticism of current political and economic decision-makers; rather is it a difficult legacy of history. To shape incentives for enterprises to integrate a 'triple-bottom-line' in activity and annual reports, indicating not only economic results but also social and environmental dimensions, is ultimately a task for society as a whole.

7.2.5. These instances illustrate the long-term challenges inherent in an SD strategy and the need for sustained public debate on its aims and means. A further conclusion to which they point is that contemporary economic models are not well adapted to the SD strategy.

7.3. The example also illustrates the need for political leadership if the SD strategy is to be more of a reality than a declaration. Governments and political parties will have to be active in shaping public support.

8. An SD society — a knowledge society

8.1. In a previous opinion, the ESC argued that a society with SD ambitions will have to be a knowledge-intensive society. The Gothenburg European Council stressed the potential of SD to unleash a new wave of technological innovation and investment.

8.2. The SD strategy is by decision part of the Lisbon overall strategy to make the EU the most competitive region in the world. The sustainable development requirements only go to further underscore the urgency of the investments in research and education foreseen in the Lisbon Strategy, while sustainable development solutions offer the potential of adding to the EU's competitiveness.

8.3. Specifically, the ESC would emphasise the need for consistency on policy and priorities between the EU Framework programme for Research and Development and the SD strategy. The EU should in its science policy take the lead in securing adequate resources for development of new solutions in transport and energy production, to mention just two examples. Without adequate EU support, the national science funding bodies will have difficulties in measuring up. The ESC also finds it important for EU financial support to be allocated to networks of universities and institutes cooperating in projects relevant to the SD strategy.

8.4. The knowledge component will have effects also on education and training systems. There will be demands for engineers and technicians with training in applying sustainable solutions. There will be demands for agronomists and other specialists in the food and animal sector. The need for interdisciplinary education and training will increase.

8.5. Particularly, the knowledge component of the SD strategy will have effects on life-long learning and training in the work-place.

9. Consultation and dialogue

9.1. It is not new to state that public support for Union policies requires adequate processes for consultation and dialogue. The problem is how to do it. The issues involved are often technical and not perceived as grass-roots priorities. The Gothenburg European Summit pointed to Sustainable Development as an area where consultation and dialogue was particularly important.

9.2. For further examination of the SD Strategy, two processes of consultation are here given closer consideration. One is the drafting of Member State plans for sustainable development, which are supposed to be linked closely to consultations with stakeholders. Another is the Commission proposal for a bi-annual Stakeholder Forum, organised in cooperation between the Commission and the ESC.

9.2.1. The form for consultation at national level is a matter for Member States and stakeholder organisations to organise. There are however certain connections to the efforts at Union level.

9.3. The first Stakeholder Forum is planned to take place in Autumn 2002.

9.3.1. The outcome of the Forum will depend heavily on the preparatory work. Stakeholder organisations should be involved early in the process.

9.3.2. The ESC suggests that the Forum be preceded by a lengthy period of consultation and dialogue at national, regional and local level. This would create a rare opportunity for the Union to be involved in dialogue not only with stakeholder organisations but with the citizens themselves for example through events in schools, events organised by voluntary organisations, and others.

9.3.3. This period of consultation would aim to raise the awareness of unsustainable trends and the need to start doing something, while also creating a channel of communication between citizens and the Union. Capturing the interest of wide public audiences is an imaginative task; in this case it would be good to formulate one or two lead themes that can clearly project the issues and the challenge.

9.3.4. Public awareness of the need for sustainable development could no doubt be higher than it is. The ESC proposes that a special information effort be made by the Commission in cooperation with organized civil society to widen knowledge and understanding of the concrete issues involved in sustainable development.

10. Institutional mechanisms for policy coherency

10.1. The problems facing policy coherency in the field of sustainable development are part of a wider problem within the Union institutions and elsewhere. The Commission White Paper on Governance has addressed this wider issue. For its part the Gothenburg European Council emphasised that sustainable development requires dealing with economic, social and environmental policies in a mutually reinforcing way.

10.2. The ESC welcomes the signals given by the European Council and agrees that sustainable development is a clear case where different sectors must be dealt with in a mutually reinforcing way.

10.3. The ESC emphasises that it is most important for policy coordination within the Commission to be good. Therefore, the ESC proposes that a special function of SD Strategy Co-ordinator be established within the Commission, either in the General Secretariat or on the Commission President's staff.

10.4. The ESC would welcome the establishment of a coordinating group within the European Parliament, to help safeguard the degree of coherency between different issues and reports.

10.5. The ESC has itself established a Sub-committee for the issues concerning sustainable development and will later consider the future relevant institutional arrangements.

10.6. The Laeken European Council in December, 2001, should consider more wide-ranging steps in order to shape better policy coherency. The Commission has pointed out that there is at present an abundance of concurrent strategies and policy programmes with little or no coordination between them.

11. Indicators to be used for the follow-up

11.1. The Commission presented at the end of October its indicators for sustainable development. Eight new indicators are thus added and eight withdrawn. The total list of indicators for the Lisbon strategy now including sustainable development has thus been kept short.

11.2. The ESC emphasises the need for data and indicators to be agreed upon and validated so that all can accept them and so that discussion on the way to act can be based on sound facts and not ideological positions. The indicators should give a wide vision of all aspects involved in sustainable development, not be short-term or partial ones.

11.3. The ESC will give further comments on the indicators at a later stage.

12. Targeted priorities from the Gothenburg Summit

12.1. The Gothenburg European Council singled out a limited number of priorities and measures for general guidance for future policy development in four priority areas. The ESC will make detailed comments in future opinions.

12.2. Combating climate change: the Council reaffirmed its commitment to deliver on Kyoto targets, to meet the indicative targets for electricity produced from renewable energy sources and invited the European Investment Bank to cooperate with the Commission on issues concerning climate change.

12.2.1. The ESC has recently adopted an opinion on the Commission's Green Paper on energy policy⁽¹⁾. The ESC emphasises that increased production of electricity from renewables will necessitate considerable investments in infrastructure and technology development. The Directive on Renewable Energy has set an ambitious target for the year 2010 for electricity produced from renewables. Reaching this target and moving beyond is a major challenge.

⁽¹⁾ ESC opinion on the 'Green Paper — Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply' (COM(2000) 769 final) — OJ C 221, 7.8.2001.

12.2.2. The ESC calls for special attention to be given to university networks with the task of generating research on ways and means to make renewable energy sources more efficient. Such networks should be allocated support within the framework R&D programmes.

12.2.3. The ESC looks forward to further initiatives from the Commission as to how the EU, having adopted the Kyoto agreement, is to achieve the promised cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

12.3. Ensuring sustainable transport: the Gothenburg Council, in emphasising the need for a shift from road to rail, water and public passenger transport, invited the Parliament and Council to adopt by 2003 revised guidelines for trans-European transport networks and noted that the Commission by 2004 will propose a framework 'to ensure that the price of using different modes of transport better reflects costs to society'.

12.3.1. The links between transport, spatial planning, and new energy-saving vehicles are very obvious. However, the supporting forces for change are to be found at municipal and regional level. Therefore, consultation efforts at local level are necessary.

12.4. Addressing threats to public health: the European Council, aware of citizens' concerns about safety and quality of food, gave priority to the adoption of the chemicals policy, to the envisaged action plan for outbreaks of infectious diseases, to the approval and start-up of the European Food Authority and Food Law Regulation, and finally called for examination of a European surveillance and early warning network on health issues.

12.4.1. This is an area where the Union very clearly can establish its capacity for responding to citizens' concerns but it is also one where the division of responsibility between EU and national level can be sensitive. Public opinion, awake to recent outbreaks of infectious diseases among farm animals, is probably more interested in what is done than in who does what.

12.4.2. High priority should be given to arrangements for a European public health surveillance and early warning network. The ESC would welcome an early Commission initiative on this.

12.5. Managing natural resources more responsibly: the European Council underlined that strong economic performance must go hand in hand with sustainable use of natural resources and agreed on objectives for changes in the Common

Agricultural Policy, on the context of the review of the Common Fisheries Policy, on the implementation of the EU Integrated Product Policy and on halting biodiversity decline with the aim of reaching this objective by 2010.

12.5.1. The ESC will present its Opinion on the future of the CAP in Spring 2002.

13. **The procedure ahead, and new issues to be addressed**

13.1. The first follow-up to the Gothenburg European Council as regards the SD strategy items is for the Barcelona European Council in March 2002. The Commission will produce for this a Synthesis Report to be finalised by January 2002.

13.2. In addition to the priority issues decided by the Gothenburg Council, the ESC proposes the following be included in the 2002 synthesis report.

13.2.1. Quality of work: in the social pillar of the SD strategy the focus has been on social exclusion and social inclusion as well as employment policy. The ESC proposes that the issues of sustained quality of work be added.

13.2.2. The Stockholm European Council agreed that regaining full employment involves focusing not only on more jobs but also on better ones. Common approaches to maintaining and improving the quality of work should be set out. New studies have shown that modern working life brings environmental and particularly psychological problems related to overstress and overwork. In the ICT sector, such phenomena have been known for some time.

13.2.3. Scientific networks and the role of the universities: a number of the challenges inherent in the SD strategy need to be met with investments in science and technology, by public funding and private. The European Council has emphasised the need for sufficient coordination between the SD strategy and the new framework R&D programme. The ESC proposes that the forthcoming synthesis report pay particular attention to the existing and planned scientific networks in relation to the SD strategy.

13.2.4. Co-operation with industry: the European Council emphasised the need for active involvement by industry in the SD strategy work. The ESC sees industry as an ally in promoting coherent sustainable policies and proposes that its role be highlighted in the synthesis report.

13.2.5. Broad Economic Guidelines: In accordance with the European Council decision, economic policies are an integrated part of the SD strategy. The next set of Broad Economic Guidelines should include an assessment of how the guidelines interact with the overall objectives for the SD strategy. The ESC suggests that the synthesis report focus on the interaction between the guidelines and the strategy.

14. Enlargement and the global dimension

14.1. The SD strategy will take years to develop and implement. It is all the more important that the Candidate countries are actively involved in the further deliberations on the EU SD strategy.

14.2. The form for this could be that representatives from the candidate countries regularly participate in meetings with the coordinating body in the European Commission, that is with the General Secretariat. This will give the candidate countries a better possibility to address the relevant problems in each country well ahead of actual membership.

14.3. ESC will for its own part regularly invite representatives of organised civil society in the candidate countries for discussions on SD strategy issues.

14.4. The SD strategy has a very important global dimension, as shown by the Rio conference on sustainable development. Next year, the United Nations conference on SD issues in Johannesburg will evaluate events since the Rio conference and address the issues ahead.

14.5. ESC underscores the EU's twin responsibility with regard to the global dimension of sustainable development, both to set a good example showing that SD measures can and should be applied and to give vigorous support to efforts to create a new and strengthened Global Deal. This last task is one of the most important in coming years for the EU. The ESC will do what it can to support it.

15. The role of the ESC in the SD strategy

15.1. In its previous Opinion, the ESC stated its intention to assist the future development of the strategy, its willingness to co-organise with the Commission bi-ennial Stakeholder Forums and to develop a watchdog function using the reports produced at national and EU level.

15.2. In this Opinion, the ESC advocates lengthy consultation leading up to the Stakeholder Forum that will take place Autumn 2002. The ESC will participate actively in preparing and monitoring this process as well as the Stakeholder Forum.

15.3. As a means to enhance coherency in policy, the ESC has established a multi-sectoral Sub-Committee for sustainable development. The ESC will later consider suitable permanent forms for establishing the necessary policy coherency. The SD dimension will have to be included as a reference frame in a number of opinions in the future.

15.4. The ESC will next year consider some of the key areas in the SD strategy in more detail and thereby add to the introduction of the SD dimension in all major parts of the EU work programme.

15.5. The ESC is the only EU institution representing broad segments of organised civil society. This gives it a unique capacity for being a constructive and supportive body in the further development and monitoring of the SD strategy.

Brussels, 29 November 2001.

The President
of the Economic and Social Committee
Göke FRERICHS