



Fact Sheet on the Lisbon Agenda of the EU

Adoption of the Lisbon Agenda

The Lisbon Agenda, also referred to as the Lisbon Strategy, was adopted at the European Summit of Lisbon, in March 2000. As a reaction to continued slow-down of economic growth in the EU, the Strategy aims at making the European Union the “most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy in the world” by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs, greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment. The Agenda has about 50 goals, mostly containing concrete targets for increasing the number of Europeans in the workforce, and investing in research and innovation.



The environmental pillar of the Lisbon Agenda

The original strategy had two dimensions: an economic and a social one. Civil society advocates have since its inception argued that economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. The environmental dimension was then added to the Lisbon Agenda at the European Council of Göteborg in June 2001, following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS).

Both strategies are intended to be complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, whereas the SDS is overarching and long-term, the Lisbon Agenda sets itself medium-term goals. Under the environmental pillar, the following guiding principles and concrete measures were added to the Lisbon Agenda:

- Sustainability impact assessments of every major policy proposal to estimate its economic, social and environmental effects.
- Getting the prices right.
- Decoupling growth from resource use and promote a sustainable use of resources.
- The promotion of environmentally friendly technologies in the context of energy and transport policies.
- The promotion of a sustainable development dimension in the external relations of the EU.

The Lisbon Agenda and sustainable development

Previous EU Presidencies such as the Dutch and Luxembourg Presidencies have actively promoted the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy in order to make the EU the most competitive area in the world. To strengthen the environmental pillar of the Lisbon Agenda, the Dutch presidency in 2004 launched its “Clean, Clever, Competitive”² initiative which asserts that elements of sustainable economic development such as eco-efficiency are crucial to achieving the goals of the Lisbon Agenda.

The Lisbon Strategy is subject to frequent review processes. As a result of its mid-term review a revised Lisbon Strategy³ was launched in 2005. The revised Strategy leaves the social and environmental dimensions marginalized and primarily focuses on the Agenda’s economic goals. Under the revised Lisbon Strategy any new environmental initiative needs to be “soundly based in science and economics”. Contributing to sustainable development is no longer an objective. This shift in focus seems to be based on the Commission’s limited view that economic development is a pre-condition to environmental protection and social development, hence disregarding their interrelationship.

WECF vision: environmental protection is a precondition to economic growth

WECF believes sustainable development and environmental protection are key to a successful Lisbon Strategy that really delivers on growth and jobs.

Women are concerned with environmental protection because we understand this ensures the availability of natural resources for future generations. Moreover, environmental protection creates the conditions for a healthy life, which is key to productivity and economic growth. Environmental pollution is the cause for many diseases such as asthma but also learning disabilities and cancer. The treatment of those and many other health effects incurs costs not only to Europe's health care systems, but also to education and employment systems.

This in turn hampers growth and competitiveness. Currently, women bear a large part of the economic and social burden of diseases related to environmental pollution, because it is usually women who are the "health managers" of their families. If as envisaged under the Lisbon Strategy, 60 % of women are supposed to join the work force by 2010, the environmental burden of disease needs to be reduced. We believe it is dangerous to assume that economic growth can only be achieved at the cost of environmental and social deregulation.

This ignores the complex inter-linkages between poverty, environmental pollution, health protection and employment in modern-day societies.

A strong environmental pillar of the Lisbon Agenda

will also contribute to a much needed sense of "ownership" of the European public in achieving the Lisbon goals and would give the Agenda the credibility it needs in order to thrive. The following measures are essential to enhance competitiveness as foreseen by the Lisbon Strategy:

- Reinforcement of the environmental pillar of the Lisbon Agenda, incorporating environmental health arguments to strengthen the policy.
- Strengthening the SDS through reinstating the public health priority area for action and establishing clear targets for reducing the environmental burden of disease.
- Eco-innovation, eco-efficiency and clean production measures need to be established and encompass the elimination of health effects for today's and tomorrow's generations. This should be implemented under the Lisbon Strategy.

1 Presidency conclusions of the European Council of Göteborg, June 2001, §20.

2 Dutch Ministry of the Environment (VROM) homepage <http://international.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=9181>

3 Common actions for growth and employment: the Community Lisbon Programme, Communication from the European Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 20th July 2005, COM (2005) 330 final.

WECF

Women in Europe for a Common Future

is a Network of 78 Organisations in 31 Western and Eastern European countries, the Caucasus and Central Asia, working on sustainable development, health and environment, and poverty reduction.

WECF Office Netherlands

PO Box 13047
3507 LA Utrecht, Netherlands
Tel: + 31 30 / 23 10 300
Fax: + 31 30 / 23 40 878

WECF Office Germany

Blumenstrasse 28, Zr 694
80331 München, Germany
Tel: + 49 89 / 20 23 23 – 90
Fax: + 49 89 / 20 23 23 – 91

Homepage: www.wecf.org, wecf@wecf.org
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