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Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

**LUXEMBOURG – EXPERIENCE IN THE MEASUREMENT OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT AND GOALS FOR THE WGSSD
Submitted by the Ministry of Environment¹**

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD

¹ This paper was prepared by Eric De Brabanter.



Luxembourg, 28 March 2006

Luxembourg — experience in the measurement of sustainable development and goals for the WGSSD

SDI in Luxembourg

In Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, Luxembourg committed itself to define and set up a sustainable development policy at national level as well as to actively participate to international developments in that domain. This commitment led to the launch by the Environment Ministry of our first national sustainable development plan in April 1999: *Plan National pour un Développement Durable* (PNDD), only available in French.²

The PNDD clearly stated that the Government would build its sustainable development policy and the integration of this concept in other policies taking into account comparable and reliable indicators, verified scientific arguments, cost-benefit analyses and costs of inaction outcomes. Consequently, the PNDD included a list of 59 indicators mostly derived from those suggested by the United Nations in the framework of the Agenda 21 action plan and perceived as relevant for Luxembourg and its sustainable development priorities. Though these indicators were an integral part of the PNDD, it was also obvious that the list was not defined once and for all. Indeed, the PNDD clearly indicated that (p. 91) “it (the list of indicators) will be progressively adapted following the results of the on-going work on indicators at EU level”. The 59 indicators presented in the PNDD were grouped under three main (and usual) domains: social, economic and environmental pillars. Within each pillar, indicators were also grouped according to themes (see PNDD, p. 97-102).

It is only in the second half of 2002, however, that Luxembourg published its first set of sustainable development indicators (SDI). Produced and almost entirely written by the Environment Ministry, the publication contained 27 indicators equally distributed into the main three usual domains: social, economic and environmental pillars.³ The final choice of these 27 SDI was the result of a relatively long process:

- going through the list of the 59 indicators suggested in the PNDD for prioritizing them into three classes with the aim of limiting the number of SDI to 20-25 in the paper publication: rank 1 (to be published), rank 2 (not to be included in the publication but only later on a web site together with rank 1 indicators) and rejected (not very relevant *in fine* or proven to be too difficult or impossible to compile);

² http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/publications/PNDD_1999_exhaustif/index.html

³ http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/publications/indicateurs_developpement_durable/index.html (in French only)

- the rank 1 list was submitted and discussed with the relevant competent administrations. Following these discussions, some proposed rank 1 indicators have been rejected or modified (definition, coverage, ...) and new indicators appeared. The later was mainly the result of a request of the Economic Ministry which wanted to see the economic pillar equally represented in the final publication. Hence, a publication containing 9 social, 9 economic and 9 environmental indicators whereas this symmetry between pillars was not an Environment Ministry prerequisite for this exercise.

A one page template was designed for each of the 27 indicators presenting the main PNDD's objective a SDI is contributing to assess (e.g. fighting against poverty and social exclusion, protect natural habitats and biodiversity, ...), its significance as regards the broad concept of sustainable development, its evolution and, finally, its graphical representation.

The 2002 27 SDI are currently being updated and uploaded on our web site.⁴ This updating is only a first step in a major revision of our set of SDI that is taking place in the context of the setting up of a process and of bodies designated by a law of June 25, 2004 on the coordination of the national sustainable development policy. The law⁵ creates two main bodies to monitor and define sustainable development policies in Luxembourg:

1. the *Conseil Supérieur pour le Développement Durable* (High Council for Sustainable Development) which will act as a think tank and an advisory committee. This Council gathers Government and municipal delegates with representatives of the civil society (trade unions, professional associations, NGOs, ...) and scientists. Besides its role of discussion forum, its prerogatives are mainly limited to propose research and studies relating to sustainable development issues and to express advices. The Council has not yet been constituted;
2. the *Commission Interdépartementale du Développement Durable* (CIDD – Inter-service Commission on Sustainable Development) gathering representatives of the different Ministries and public administrations under the leadership of the Environment Ministry. The CIDD has an important role in Luxembourg's sustainable development policy since it is in charge of drafting the PNDD every 4 years on the basis of its 2-yearly national report on the implementation of sustainable development (*Rapport National sur la mise en oeuvre du Développement Durable* – RNDD). The CIDD has already met twice, the first time in December 2005.

The law clearly states that SDI are part of the RNDD so to help describing, analyzing and evaluating the sustainable development policy measures taken. The actual revision and updating of our SDI is therefore taking place in this context and is done in two phases:

1. simply updating the 27 SDI published in 2002 (finished, uploading on-going);
2. proposing new indicators (on-going) as well as a new structure moving from the three usual pillars to more cross-cutting main themes/domains.

⁴ http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/indicateurs/index.html (in French only)

⁵ http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/legislation/index.html for the text published in the Official Journal of Luxembourg (Mémorial) and http://www.environnement.public.lu/developpement_durable/developpement_durable_suite/index.html (in French only)

So far, new indicators have been suggested by the Environment Ministry⁶ and submitted to the CIDD. It is hoped that members of the CIDD will also propose indicators whose definition, methodology and inclusion in the set of SDI will be discussed by this Commission. Due to a tight schedule, the new set of SDI will not be part of the first RNDD that should be ready before summer 2006. However, it is expected to upload them on our web site before the end of 2006.

Finally, we do not foreseen to publish all the SDI on paper. Following positive experiences in other countries, we would rather produce only a leaflet with a selection of SDI and make a dynamic use of our web site for incorporating, deleting and updating our set of SDI.

Goals for the WGSSD

At EU level, work has already been done to identify broad domains SDI should cover as well as on which indicators can illustrate these. Therefore, our interest is mainly focused on the broad conceptual framework presented in the ToR of the WGSSD, i.e. on the “capital” approach and on the relationship between integrated environmental and economic accounts and SDI, since these concepts and approaches have not yet been used in Luxembourg to develop SDI. All the aspects relating to international comparisons by the identification of a menu of good SDI is also important to us. We also have interest in discussions on how to define an “integrated” or a “composite” SDI that can be used to communicate (and to compete with rather marketed products such as the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI)⁷). Finally we also expect this WG will bring a value added to the on-going works on SDI through its original approach and the inclusion of UNECE, OECD and the EC instead of competing with existing exercises.

Text prepared by:

Eric DE BRABANTER

Ministère de l'Environnement

18, Montée de la Pétrusse

L-2918 Luxembourg

tel: (+352)4786842

fax: (+352)4786835

e-mail: eric.debrabanter@mev.etat.lu

URL: www.emwelt.lu

⁶ the proposal by the Environment Ministry is based mainly on the conclusions of the work of and the discussion held during Eurostat's Task Force on SDI. Final report of this Task Force at http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-68-05-551

⁷ <http://www.yale.edu/esi/>