

AGENDA 21 - THE FIRST 5 YEARS

**Implementation of Agenda 21
in the European Community**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Five years after the Rio summit, we can be pleased, but far from complacent in reviewing the European Community's progress in implementing Agenda 21. In many areas of environmental policy, we have made significant progress over the past few years. We also have improved the integration of environmental considerations into other policies. However, by any objective measure, we are only beginning to make headway against many environmental threats to our global future, and have a long road ahead of us to reach the goal of sustainable development. In a number of important instances, we have as yet failed to do more than slow down the rate of environmental deterioration.

But we have come far enough down the road to be able to see our goal more clearly and to chart our path and step forward more confidently than five years ago. In effect, we have greatly increased the level of detail on our road map to sustainability - a substantial achievement in five years.

The first steps in the right direction have been taken. We have built a framework of commitments and cooperation at international, regional and national levels which did not exist before the Rio Conference. A framework which is well-designed and sturdy. Policies are being developed and implemented to reach our commitments.

The European Community is ready to take the lead in aiming for further binding commitments in all key international fora - the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, OECD, and under the global and regional processes covering Climate change, Biodiversity, Desertification, Forestry, and Acidification, to name some of the most important.

As in the past, the European Community will endeavour to set an example and live up to its responsibility in implementing Agenda 21.

Jacques Santer

PREFACE, BY MS RITT BJERREGAARD

Three years before the dawn of a new millennium world leaders will gather at the UN General Assembly Special Session to concern themselves with the long term survival and well-being of their citizens. They will review global progress in implementing Agenda 21, the plan adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992 and chart a path for the future.

Throughout the past five years, the European Union has worked hard to keep Agenda 21 high on the list of political priorities in Europe and in the world. No country can reach sustainable development on its own and the global community still has far to go.

I hope that the governments meeting in June 1997 will be able to confirm resoundingly that sustainable development can only be achieved through true partnership between developing and developed countries, between international institutions, and between all sectors and groups in society.

I hope that we will depart from the General Assembly with a renewed sense of urgency and commitment to sustainable development as the fundamental goal that will secure the lives and prosperity of future generations.

Ritt Bjerregaard, Member of the European Commission

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
1. Linking Social and Economic Development	7
2. Conservation and Management of Resources	10
3. Strengthening Participation	17
4. Tools for Sustainable Development.....	20
5. Future Plans and Progress	24
Annex Bibliography.....	27

Abbreviations

CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
NO _x	Nitrogen oxides
CSD	United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development
ECU	European Currency Unit (ECU 1 = \$1.16 in March 1997)
5 th EAP	Fifth Environmental Action Programme of the European Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
IMO	International Monetary Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Phare	European Community assistance programme for central and eastern Europe, and the Baltic States
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SPRINT	European Community action programme for innovation and technology transfer
Tacis	European Community assistance programme for the New Independent States (of the former Soviet Union) and Mongolia, except the Baltic States
UNCED	United Nation Conference on Environment and Development – the “Rio Conference”
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the follow up to UNCED
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

INTRODUCTION

As our global society approaches the next millennium, we have unprecedented knowledge and tools to change life on our planet for better or for worse. Agenda 21 sets out a plan of action to guarantee that life in the next millennium will change substantially for the better. It was endorsed by the world's governments at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro, five years ago in June 1992.

This brochure describes some of the most important and innovative policies and activities which the European Community¹ has developed during the past five years to implement Agenda 21 and the priorities for the future. It describes them against the backdrop of the problems to be solved and, where possible, assesses what has been accomplished and what is still to be done.

The Commission's review of implementation of Agenda 21 complements the Community's review of the implementation of the 5th Environmental Action Programme "*Towards Sustainability*".² New priorities for the implementation of the 5th Action Programme during 1997-2000³ should also steer the Community's implementation of Agenda 21 towards success.

The European Union

Member State	Area '000 km ²	Population millions	GDP per capita 1996 ECU at current prices
Austria	84	8.0	21,553
Belgium	31	10.1	20,455
Denmark	43	5.2	26,100
Germany	357	81.5	22,763
Greece	132	10.4	9,132
Spain	506	39.2	11,720
France	544	58.0	20,810
Finland	338	5.1	18,999
Ireland	70	3.6	15,509
Italy	301	57.2	16,353
Luxembourg	3	0.4	32,942
Netherlands	42	15.4	19,892
Portugal	92	9.9	8,481
Sweden	450	8.8	22,567
UK	244	58.3	15,297
EU-15	3,236	371.5	18,088

As a supranational entity encompassing 15 highly diverse Member States stretching from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean, the European Union obviously cannot do everything itself. Some areas

¹ The European Community has been extended, but not replaced by the European Union established by the Maastricht Treaty. Although it can be difficult to determine when each term is appropriate, this brochure uses the term *European Union* to refer to the geographical and political entity created by the Maastricht Treaty. The European Community is the legal entity which is responsible for environment and development policy under the Treaty of Rome.

² "*Towards Sustainability*" a European Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development, COM(92) 23 final, 27.3.92.

³ Pending before the Council at the time of publication.

targeted by Agenda 21 are primarily the competency of the EU Member States; in others areas the Community can and does take the lead.

Yet, even where it lacks legislative responsibility, the Community seeks to support actions by the Member States, regional and local governments through funding of projects and research, support for cooperation and the exchange of experience, and facilitating communication between subnational, national, and international levels of action.

1. LINKING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“It will only be possible to ensure sustainable development by integrating its economic, social and environmental components in a transparent, accountable and democratic framework.”¹

The leaders of the European Union know that integration is the key to the future: in society, in its relationships with other states, but especially the integration of environmental concerns across the board in decision-making throughout government, business, and society as a whole.

The origins of the European Union are rooted in the desire of six western European countries after the Second World War to establish common political institutions which would rule out forever the possibility of future war between them.

The six Heads of State who signed the Rome Treaty in 1957 resolved to “ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe”. They affirmed that, “the essential objective of their efforts [is] the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples”²

Forty years later, the European Community has evolved into a European Union of 15 states, with up to a dozen more lining up to enter.

The value of close regional integration and wider international cooperation is now abundantly clear. A crucial goal for the future is therefore to strengthen and deepen cooperation at all levels of government and society so that Agenda 21 can be fully implemented within our lifetime.

Priorities for Development

The Union’s priorities and policies to link social and economic development have four spheres of action:

- internal integration of marginal groups and less developed regions
- integration between the Union and its neighbours to the North, East and South
- integration of environment in policies related to other industrialized countries
- integration of environment in policies related to developing countries.

The downward spiral of poverty, population, poor health

Poverty is a cause and a consequence of the unsustainable use of resources. Whether local, national or regional, population growth can be a driving force of poverty and environmental degradation.

By 2000 our global population will reach 6 billion, 3.5 billion more than in 1950. Although population in the European Union is relatively stable, migration and economic change mean that more than 50 million residents are considered to live in poverty.³

Social services and health are above all the responsibilities of national governments. The European Commission supports the Member States through special funds and through research and pilot projects focusing on issues such as health, training, generating investment, and improvement of infrastructure.

¹ Conclusions of the Environment Council, 9.12.96.

² Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

³ That is, living in households whose total expenditure is less than 50% of the national average.

The new Protocol on Social Policy to the Maastricht Treaty committed the Community to action to promote social protection, living and working conditions, the development of human resources, lasting employment and to combating exclusion. The Maastricht Treaty also introduced a new chapter to the EC Treaty on international development aid, which highlights the fight against poverty as one of the main goals of development cooperation.

The close relationship between population, development and the environment are beginning to be reflected in many countries' development policies, as well as in that of the European Community.

One way has been to reduce the debt burden. The Community supports the World Bank/IMO efforts to lighten the debt burden on the heavily indebted poorest developing countries. Eleven of thirteen of these countries are linked to the Community through the Lomé Convention. The Community's own aid is given almost exclusively as grants.

Community development aid is supporting education – particularly of women, health, reduction of infant mortality, women's empowerment and health services, and the introduction of nationally determined population strategies.

In 1994, the European Commission set an annual target of ECU 300 million for development aid in population and reproductive health by 2000. In 1996, it exceeded this target, for example, by granting ECU 200 million to India to improve quality reproductive health services according to Cairo Conference¹ recommendations.

Community aid to the health sector has grown to ECU 690 million under Lomé IV and projects are being reoriented away from infrastructure and equipment, towards the implementation of health policies.

The new emphases are on providing basic health care, building regional health and research training capacities in family planning, and responding to the threat of the HIV-AIDS virus. The Community is a major donor of development aid.

Support for cities

While Europe is striving to restore decaying city centres and industrial regions, developing countries are struggling with an unplanned urban population explosion that has outstripped the capacity of local governments to supply basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and garbage clean up.

In Europe, more than 300 cities and towns have joined the Sustainable Cities campaign, which was launched in Aalborg in 1994. The European Commission supports five major networks of local authorities which help the signatories to the Aalborg Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability to work together and learn from each other.

In 1996, a pilot version of a European good practice information service on sustainable cities was launched on the Internet.² The Lisbon Action Plan gives practical guidance to local governments who want to implement the Aalborg Charter.

Urban problems in developing countries are a relatively new issue for the Community, since its developing country partners had not previously given urban projects high priority.

But the balance is shifting as urban issues move up the developing countries' own agendas. From 1990 to 1995, ECU 27 million were committed for projects in Asian, Latin American and Mediterranean urban areas, mainly for waste management, sewage treatment and sanitation. For example, since 1993, the Community has supported the governments of 16 small coastal communities in the Ivory Coast which have been devolved new powers to plan and manage their own development.

Mediterranean projects have focused on solid waste management; for example, two projects on the Gaza Strip will increase the efficiency of solid waste collection and management services.

¹ 1994 Conference on Population and Development.

² See the European Commission homepage: <http://europa.eu.int>.

A European NGO¹ project to encourage exchange of experience, know-how and technology among marginal urban communities in Latin America was presented as “best practice” at the 1996 UN Habitat II Conference, in Istanbul.

¹ “Non-Governmental Organisation” - not-for-profit groups who focus their activities on the improvement of social and environmental conditions.

2. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

“Sound stewardship is not a task for governments alone.”¹

Protecting the air

Protection of the atmosphere is an environmental issue that will dominate Community policies in the coming century, affecting policies as diverse as energy, transport, and land development.

Community activities to protect the air concern a range of problems: limiting depletion of stratospheric ozone; controlling acidification, ground-level ozone and other pollutants; and climate change. Each problem affects different sectors of society and industry and requires a particular solution.

Important steps have been taken over the past decade, but many serious problems remain.

One problem – ozone depletion in the stratosphere, is much more easily dealt with than the others. Here, the Community has already met or exceeded its international obligations. The Community met its 1996 target for phasing out CFCs and halons, and is on course to meet the targets for HCFCs under the Montreal Protocol - achieving a 35% reduction by 2004 leading to total phaseout by 2030. Future progress will depend on ensuring that developing countries also adopt ever tougher regulations on the production and use of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Similarly, the Community met its obligation to reduce SO₂ and NO_x levels ahead of deadline set by the United Nations Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.²

Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases remains the most intractable problem facing the Community today. Although it is on course to stabilise CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by 2000, it has not been able to adopt the energy-carbon tax that would make further reductions possible. The Community is working hard to promote a binding protocol to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change requiring countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in stages by 2005, 2010 and 2020. It is aiming at agreement on a 15% reduction in emissions of CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide by 2010.

One of the best ways to achieve this goal is by reducing energy consumption. The poorer regions have the least efficient energy use, so Community Structural Funds have targeted substantial financing on energy infrastructure projects. The European Commission is talking to the oil and motor vehicle industries about major reductions in fuel consumption in order to reduce CO₂ emissions.

The European Commission's Auto-Oil research programme has been carried out in cooperation with motor vehicle manufacturers and the oil industry and is beginning to bear fruit. The Commission has proposed new emission limits and fuel quality standards that should help ensure that air quality will continue to improve despite the increase in traffic.

The Community's record on acidification is mixed. More than 60% of the European Union's area suffers from excess acidification, mainly in northern countries. Although it has substantially reduced emissions of SO₂ and NO_x from power plants, critical loads in many regions will continue to be exceeded and plant and aquatic life will continue to be damaged. A comprehensive strategy to reduce acidification to below critical loads over the coming decade was set out in a recent Commission Communication³, but success will depend on long term concentrated effort across a number of sectors.

Short-term air pollution exceeds World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality standards at least once a year in most large European cities. Transport is a main source of such local air pollution and controlling emissions from motor vehicles poses a knotty problem in itself.

¹ Ms. Ritt Bjerregaard, Member of the European Commission.

² See Council Decision 81/462/EEC.

³ *Community Strategy to combat Acidification*, COM(97) 88.

The clear risk is that the increase in vehicles and travel will outweigh the benefits from improved emissions controls. Although the Community has reduced emissions substantially, much more needs to be done.

Public transport is – or can be – an alternative to the car in urban areas. The Community is encouraging “best practice” models in urban transport and is supporting research and demonstration projects in new technologies.

Newly published transport sector guidelines point the way to sustainable transport policies; among the recommendations are: getting the intermodal balance right, involving all stakeholders, securing operation and maintenance of networks by convincing users to pay realistic prices, and taking account of environmental concerns right from the start of the planning process.¹

¹ *Towards sustainable transport: a sectoral approach in practice*, COM(96) 654.

Protection of the Atmosphere: Progress under the 5th EAP

	Goal	Progress	Outlook
Climate Change	'no exceeding of natural absorption capacity of planet earth'		Increased global economic activity, increased contribution from transport sector and limited impact of energy saving and reduction programmes require intensified effort.
Carbon Dioxide CO₂	2000 - stabilise at 1990 levels Progressive reductions at the horizons 2005 and 2010	On target	Will meet target.
Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O)	1994 - identify and apply controlling measures	Delays in adopting strategy	Progress report forecasts increase in methane emissions
Ozone Depletion	'working towards ultimate goal of no emissions of ozone depleting substances'	Phased out CFCs and halons by 1996	Concern is now whether less-developed countries will be able to reduce consumption of ODSs
HCFCs	1995-limit consumption to 2.6% of 1989 CFC level	Achieved	
CFCs, carbon tetrachloride, halons, III trichlorethane	Phase out before 1996 except for some essential uses	Achieved	
Acidification	'No exceeding of critical loads and levels'		Expected acid deposition levels in 2000 will fall but in Northern Europe and Alpine Region critical loads will still be exceeded.
NO_x	1994 - stabilisation at 1990 levels 2000 - 30% reduction of 1990 levels	1994 target reached	Target for 2000 unlikely to be achieved due to increase in private cars and road transport for freight
SO_x	2000 - 35% reduction on 1985 levels	Achieved in 1994	Reduction of 50% on 1985 levels likely by 2000
NH₃	variable targets in accordance with problems identified in regions		
General VOCs	1996 - 10% reduction of man-made emissions on 1990 levels 1999 - 30% reduction on 1990 levels	Data not complete	Mobile sources account for 50% of VOC emissions. Expected increase in use of cars will not facilitate achievement of targets
Dioxins	2005 - 90% reduction on 1985 levels of dioxin emissions of identified sources	Full data not available in all Member States	Potential for 80% reduction by 2005. Much rests on reduction of emissions from waste incineration and other combustion processes
Heavy metals	1995 - at least 70% reduction from all pathways of Cd, Hg and Pb emissions	Most North Sea countries achieved 50% reduction	

Protecting the waters

The earth's freshwater resources are an essential and highly vulnerable mainstay of human society.

Water was one of the earliest priorities of Community environmental policies and great strides have been made in reducing water pollution from industrial sources and sewage. But much remains to be done. More than 2 million bathers suffer from gastro-intestinal diseases every year; nitrate and pesticide levels in groundwater exceed Community drinking water standards over much of the continent.

The Community has set the goal of achieving good status in all freshwaters by the end of 2010.

In the past, the Community concentrated on protecting water quality and in controlling some key pollutants of freshwater resources. Today, Community policy seeks to integrate the management of freshwater resources and supplies with the protection of its quality. This integrated approach combines legislated quality standards and emission limits within a coherent water management system based not on administrative boundaries but on natural river basins, as has long been the practice in some Member States.

Most importantly, according to a piece of legislation currently being considered, by 2010 Member States would have to ensure that water prices reflect the full and true costs of supplying and maintaining high quality and reliable water supplies.

One troublesome area which cannot be controlled by simple regulation is the pollution of water by nitrate run-off from agricultural fields. The focus of effort today is on teaching farmers how to avoid excessive use of fertilisers.

A measure of the Community's commitment to water quality can be found in its support for the construction of sewerage and waste water treatment plants: ECU 7,000 million will be provided from the Structural Funds during 1994-1999 for regions which have less than 75% of the Community average income. The proportion of the population connected to the water supply in Portugal should rise from 61% in 1989 to 95% in 1999; the proportion of urban waste water treated in compliance with Community standards in Ireland should rise from 20% in 1993 to 80% in 1999.

The Community's commitment to clean, available water is also a prominent part of its aid programmes to developing countries. Through the European Development Fund (EDF), it has provided more than ECU 270 million since 1990 for water supply and sanitation projects in ACP¹ countries under the Lomé IV Convention. These projects are linked to public awareness campaigns that ensure the involvement of the local community in maintaining and managing the new and improved water systems. In many cases, priority is given to small scale projects carried out by local communities and NGOs.

Coastal and marine environments are no less important than freshwater. Almost half of the European Union population lives within 50 km of the coast, and the coastal environment is often threatened by uncontrolled urbanisation and tourism development.

The Community's contribution to coastal zone management has been supportive rather than regulatory. It began to stimulate debate by launching a demonstration programme in 1995 which should show how sustainable development can be achieved in a wide variety of types of coastal areas. Work is proceeding rapidly; in 1997-98 projects will demonstrate sustainable development practices in 26 areas.

The European Community's commitment to the protection of the oceans is expressed primarily through its adherence to international conventions for the protection of marine environments, including the Mediterranean, North-west Atlantic, North and Baltic Seas. Recent directives have strengthened controls on pollution from ships and in harbours, and these have been supplemented by more strategic measures such as the Community Action Programme to improve Member States' response to major pollution incidents at sea.

¹ Asian, Caribbean and Pacific.

The Community is also responsible for the management of fisheries. Over-fishing has long been a growing economic and social, as well as resource management problem. Substantial reductions in fish catches are being introduced which should enable a long-term balance to be achieved between the need to preserve fish stocks and the needs of the fisheries sector.

Protecting Fisheries

Under the Maastricht Treaty and international agreements, the Community is obliged to develop fisheries resources sustainably. Fisheries management shares the same objectives as conservation of the marine environment — safeguarding marine ecosystems and responsible use of marine resources.

The Community's five top priorities for fisheries management are:

- greater contribution from scientific research
- better training, information and transparency
- reduced fisheries pressures
- improved nature conservation measures
- integrated management of coastal areas.

These internal priorities are also reflected in the Community's bilateral and international negotiations.

Protecting life

The 1992 Convention on Biodiversity is the framework of the European Community's programmes to protect habitats and species within and beyond its borders. Many important areas of biodiversity in the Union are being constantly reduced through human activities ranging from urban and industrial development to more intensive farming. All types of European ecosystems are facing severe stresses, and the loss of biodiversity is far more likely to increase than to stabilise, the European Environment Agency concluded in 1994.¹

The Community's strategy for maintaining biodiversity will be based on a combination of habitats protection under the 1992 Habitats Directive² using the Natura 2000 programme to create a linked network of European habitats and corridors between them, and the promotion of sustainable land management practices in and around habitats of importance.

But success will depend on careful shaping and implementation of transport, agriculture and tourism policies in the future.

The Natura 2000 network should be completed by 2004. Unfortunately, Member States have had difficulty in designating sites for habitat protection and these delays could significantly reduce the effectiveness of the network.

The goals of protecting biodiversity and promoting development in poorer rural areas (which may contain important habitats) are often in potential conflict. The Structural Funds have introduced environmental appraisal requirements for their projects and can support studies and measures to reconcile environmental with economic development needs.

The European Community has long supported nature protection projects in developing countries, including programmes for the protection of endangered species and the management of national parks.

¹ *Europe's Environment: The Dobris Assessment.*

² Council Directive 92/43/EEC.

ECU 60 million were committed during 1990-1995, supporting, for example, elephant conservation and a community wildlife project in Kenya, and the Himalayan Jungle Project in Pakistan.

Protecting the land

The Member States retain primary responsibility for land use planning and management. However, the Community is increasingly active in spatial planning of transport, energy and communication networks, and has long been active in the protection of international rivers such as the Rhine and the Danube.

A key, perhaps the first, critical step towards the integration of environmental concerns into European land use planning was taken by the Community in 1985 when it adopted the Directive on Environmental Impact Assessment. In 1996, A new directive extended the environmental impact assessment procedures upstream in the decision-making process to cover strategic regional and land development plans and programmes, before site specific development decisions are made. The directive will require alternative solutions to be assessed and allow the cumulative impacts of small but numerous projects to be assessed together.

Forests cover 127.8 million hectares in the European Union. Forested area has grown by 10% from 1960-1990. Forest policy touches every other aspect of environmental protection: forests provide habitats for many endangered species, and are an important source of materials, income and international trade for many countries, and a critical global sink for the greenhouse gas CO₂.

The Community adopted a forest strategy and reformed the Common Agricultural Policy in 1992, in part to support afforestation and improvement of forests. These reforms are showing some signs of success: In 1994-1997, national plans will create 650,000 hectares of new forest and rehabilitate 130,000 hectares of forest. The Community will contribute 50-75% of the costs of the projects.

The Community gives an equally high priority to protecting forests of global importance. It is seeking a legally binding international instrument for protecting forests which will help reverse the accelerating trend towards the loss of forests by promoting sustainable forest management. It has emphasised sustainable forest management in its agreements with developing countries and, in particular, added a protocol on Sustainable Management of Forest Resources when the Lomé IV Convention was revised in 1995. The Commission published a manual on implementing the Forest Protocol in 1996.

Every year, the Community commits about ECU 120 million to forest management projects in developing countries . For example, the Pilot Programme for the Conservation of Brazilian Rainforests received ECU 57 million to assist Brazil in the conservation and sustainable management of Amazonia and Mata Atlantica. It is one of the most successful examples in practice of the Forestry Principles adopted at UNCED in 1992.

The Community is a member of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, and decided in 1996 to ratify the new agreement. During 1992-1999 it is allocating about ECU 50 million annually to promote tropical forests.¹

The fight against drought and desertification has been an important theme of Community development cooperation activities since the early 1980s. Since 1990, it has given ECU 185 million under the Lomé IV Convention for anti-desertification projects in Africa. It is undertaking a special awareness-raising and policy planning process to improve the integration of the Desertification Convention's measures into its aid projects.

The Community strongly supports the Convention on Combating Desertification, which it signed in 1994, and is in the process of ratifying. The Convention's bottom-up approach to controlling

¹ Council Regulation EC/3062/95 on operations to promote tropical forests formalizes the programme approved in 1991 at the behest of the European Parliament.

desertification focuses on involving local communities in the planning, agreement and implementation of national programmes.

The Community committed ECU 105 million to desertification projects in the southern Mediterranean countries, many of which focused on water management and remote sensing.

One-third of the less-favoured rural areas in the European Union are mountainous. In these harsh regions, moderation is the key to preserving their fragile ecosystems - moderation in agriculture and moderation in tourism development. The Community ratified the Alpine Convention in 1996 aiming to safeguard Alpine ecosystems and ensure sustainable development in the region.

Reduced price supports and the decoupling of income support from the price system have reduced the incentives for intensive production and the over-use of chemical fertilisers and plant production products, but not enough has been done to halt the pollution of soil and water from the agricultural sector.

Yet, sustainable agriculture depends on the conservation of water, soil and genetic resources. The 1992 reform of the Common Agriculture Policy goes some way towards reversing the intensification trend, but much more is needed to integrate environmental concerns into agricultural policies and practices.

Other reforms include the promotion of less intensive production methods, reduced livestock density, 20-year set asides from cultivation for ecological purposes, nature conservation and countryside stewardship.

European rural areas still contain a quarter of the Union's population. They are often characterised by a higher proportion of natural areas and high biodiversity, but lower incomes and a great dependence on agriculture for income. The Structural Funds have given substantial support to rural areas to modernise agricultural structures and to provide alternative sources of income and jobs.

3. STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATION

“Critical to the implementation of Agenda 21 will be the commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups.”¹

Empowering people

Many of the European Community's programmes and policies described in the preceding pages are based on the principle that policies and projects should involve the groups affected by them from the beginning to the end. Not only is this a fundamental principle of democratic government at every level, it is a chief guarantee of success.

The Treaty on European Union expresses the principles of subsidiarity and shared responsibility, dialogue and partnership.

Civil society has been given specific mechanisms for participating in the development and implementation of Community policies and laws. For example, the Economic and Social Committee represents social institutions ranging from industry to trade unions, from consumer and environmental organisations.

The newly established Committee of Regions gives regional governments a formal role in European Union government.

An important new dialogue group was set up under the 5th EAP to bring Community environmental policies and laws closer to the people - a General Consultative Forum on the Environment and Sustainable Development comprising 32 representatives of enterprises, consumers, unions and professional organisations, environmental groups and local and regional authorities. In addition, two governmental bodies were established to promote collaboration between countries and different levels of government: the Implementation Network of national authorities, and the Environmental Policy Review Group of the top environmental officials from the Commission and the Member States.

Sustainable development will remain an empty vision without the wholehearted understanding and support of the general population. But scientific fact and technical solutions do not translate easily into sustainable lifestyles. So, in 1994, the Commission contributed ECU 5.4 million to environmental awareness-raising projects in Europe. The projects range from consultations with leading NGOs about key international issues such as trade and environment, to public campaigns about energy conservation, ecological tax reform, household waste management, eco-labels for selected products, coastal zone management, and public transport.

Empowering local authorities

Where the Community does not have legislative responsibility, as in many areas of social policy, it has supported networks of local authorities to define principles of action, to carry out demonstration and pilot projects, and to exchange and disseminate their experience widely. In particular, this has been done where environmental protection measures need to be taken at local level, as in traffic planning, urban growth, tourism management, habitat protection, etc.

In each of these areas, the Community has programmes to involve local authorities and strengthen their environmental capacities and actions.

¹ *Agenda 21*, Introduction.

Empowering women

Discrimination against women was outlawed in the European Community's founding Treaty of 1957, and the Court of Justice has played a key role in giving effect to this mandate of equality. The 4th Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1996-2000) covers a number of the areas addressed in the Beijing Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The European Union is just as committed to enhancing the status, economic role and living conditions of women and ensuring that women and men benefit equally in its development cooperation. The Council emphasised that women's participation is indispensable for achieving the Community's development objectives and established a strategy for mainstreaming gender issues throughout its development cooperation. Now the Community pays systematic attention to integrating gender issues in all policies, programming and projects.

The Council also called for strengthening the institutional capacity in partner countries on gender issues through sensitisation and training of policy makers, data collection, and by reinforcing women-specific structures and gender expertise within government institutions.

Trade unions and industry

Many industrial sectors and trade unions have set up European offices so that they can become regular partners in the dialogue of evolving policies and programmes.

The 5th EAP singles out public and private enterprises as a focus of action. Because virtually all enterprises depend on natural resources for their economic activities, and produce wastes which need to be safely disposed of, sustainable development will depend on the good will and action of industry.

Both groups can see the need for strong environmental management in industry, and already more than 600 factories have received certification for their environmental management systems under the Community's Environmental Management and Assessment Scheme (EMAS).

Both trade unions and industry can rejoice in the Community's growing environmental services sector which currently employs 1.6 million people.

The Community has trained 200 representatives at its Euro-Info Centres in its environmental programmes and in particular has concentrated on helping small and medium-sized enterprises improve their environmental management and identify market opportunities in the environmental sectors.

NGOs and decentralized cooperation with developing countries

Within the European Union, the Community supports non-governmental organisations who are active in environmental issues. It holds regular discussions with the seven largest non-governmental organisations and supports projects by the European Environmental Bureau, an association of 134 NGOs.

The European Commission cooperates with the NGO Development Liaison Committee, which was established in 1976 to provide a link between a network of development NGOs and the Commission. It holds an annual conference of its members and the Commission. NGOs were represented on the European Community delegation to UNCED.

Development NGOs have become major partners in Community aid programmes. From 1976 to 1994, the cumulative total commitment of co-financed NGO projects totalled more than ECU 1,000 million. About 90% of this money goes to support Community-based NGOs who have diverse projects in developing countries. For example:

- a Spanish NGO is supporting a circus troupe in Brazil which brings debate on socio-economic issues to isolated and often illiterate communities in Amazonia

- a Dutch NGO is helping a group of Cambodian women deal with the problems faced by the many female-headed families left by the war
- an Italian NGO is providing the basic equipment for Mali's first free radio station.

Under the Lomé IV Convention, 75% of cost or up to ECU 300,000 can be provided to micro-projects which often involve local NGOs in developing countries. Since 1982, a budget line "Environment in Developing Countries" has proved to be particularly attractive for NGO projects.

4. TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“The watchword from Earth Summit II must be implementation.”¹

Financing sustainability within the European Union

The Structural Funds are used to promote more balanced socio-economic development in the Union, essentially by transferring funds from the wealthier to the poorer regions of the Union through specific programmes. Between 1994 and 1999, the Structural Funds have a total allocation of more than ECU 152,200 million and the Cohesion Fund provides a further ECU 14,450 million.

By 2000, the Funds² will amount to about one-third of the Community budget. Recent reforms mean that environmental concerns must now be addressed systematically in all programming documents, and environmental profiles of the area covered must be prepared for all regional programmes. National environmental authorities must be involved in the development and monitoring of programmes, and environmental indicators are used as part of programme evaluation.

High environmental quality has been a factor in attracting investment to poorer regions of the Union, and the Funds are increasingly drawn on for environmental improvement projects, such as the clean up of coasts, harbour and rivers, and the rehabilitation of contaminated and decayed industrial and urban areas. The Funds are also used to promote environmentally friendly technologies, particularly by small and medium-sized enterprises, and to provide support for renewable energy, conservation, public transport and environmental management training.

LIFE, the environment fund, was set up in 1992 to be a catalyst by supporting the development and implementation of Community environmental law and policy. With a budget of ECU 450 million during 1996-2000, it concentrates on nature and habitat conservation, legislation, integration of environment and industry, help to local authorities, and measures in Baltic and Mediterranean countries.

¹ Ms Ritt Bjerregaard, Member of the European Commission

² They are the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance. The Cohesion Fund was established under the Maastricht Treaty, and supports Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland for environmental and transport projects. LIFE, the environment fund, groups together several earlier initiatives.

Structural Funds 1994 - 1999

Allocations (million ECU in 1994 prices)			
Objective	Total	Allocated to the Environment	%
Objective 1	93,972	8,328 (8.9%)	
Regions whose development is lagging behind		ow : Sanitation & Water Distribution	84%
		Industrial and Urban Environment, nature protection	13%
		Waste collection and treatment	3%
		Research training other	1%
Objective 2	15,352		
Regions worst affected by industrial decline	7,305	397 (5.4%)	
	in 1994 - 96	ow: Decontamination, Waste treatment & clean technology	53%
		Rehabilitation of industrial sites and the urban environment;	41%
		Training and other	6%
Objective 3	12,938		
Long term and youth unemployment			
Objective 4	2,246		
Adaptation of workers to industrial change			
Objective 5a	5,251		
Agriculture Structural adjustment			
Objective 5a	885		
Fisheries Structural adjustment			
Objective 5b	6,860	721 (10.5%)	
Vulnerable rural areas		ow: Environmental management, landscape and biodiversity	56%
		protection	
		Decontamination, industrial waste treatment, clean technology	30%
		Forestry development	14%
Objective 6	697		
Very sparsely populated arctic regions			
Total allocations for Objectives 1 - 6	138,201		
Community Initiatives	14,018		
Grand Total	152,219		

Financing sustainability outside the European Union: Central and eastern Europe and the CIS

Environment has been a welcome priority of the Phare and Tacis programmes of aid to the countries east of the European Union¹ since the very beginning. During the first year of the programme, Czechoslovakia even devoted its entire Phare budget to the environment.

Today, the emphasis in the countries of central and eastern Europe has shifted from technical support to institutional strengthening to investment. Ten of these are candidates for European Union membership, and are directing substantial aid to aligning their environmental laws and procedures with those of the Union.

Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union have been pushing the European Community to strengthen the environmental component of the Tacis programme. They were rewarded in 1996 when the Council required at least 10% of aid to be spent on environmental projects. Russia and Ukraine have made environment a priority sector for Tacis assistance.

Tacis recently launched a programme to place environmental policy advisers in all the Ministries of Environment in the region, and an environmental awareness raising project started up in early 1997.

Financing sustainability outside the Union: Developing countries

Together, the European Union and its Member States provide more than half of all development aid, representing 0.38% of the Union's GNP in 1995. Disbursements of European Community Funds are made through the Lomé Convention (40-45% of Community aid to developing countries), and its programme of support to Asian and Latin American states (ALA), its Mediterranean programme, and a number of sectoral programmes such as food aid.

Aid under the Lomé IV Convention has been subject to environmental assessment since 1990. The 1992 ALA regulation specifies that at least 10% of aid should be spent on meeting environmental needs. The strategy for cooperation with Asia adopted in 1994 includes the priorities: contributing to sustainable development and to alleviation of poverty in the least prosperous countries. Further strategy documents cover energy and environment. A specific strategy document has been prepared for China.

A Europe-Asia Strategy in the field of Environment is in preparation which will identify areas where Europe has particular strengths to offer Asia in environmental cooperation.

The strategy for Latin America includes the fight against poverty as one of three main priorities, and the region has benefited from considerable support for biodiversity projects.

Environment is one of 20 areas of assistance to Mediterranean states.

A small budget for Environment in Developing Countries was established in 1982, which peaked at ECU 26 million in 1993 before falling back to ECU 15 million in 1996, reflecting the growing priority given to environmental projects in the major programmes of development aid. Sustainable Forest Management also benefits from a specific budget currently at about ECU 50 million per year.

¹ Phare is the programme of assistance for central and eastern European countries; Tacis provides assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Mongolia.

Funds to Primary Environmental Projects¹ 1990-1995

	Disbursed		Committed	
	MECU	%	MECU	%
Land Resources	143	32	209	24
Tropical Forests	108	24	307	35
Biodiversity	47	10	60	7
Urban Environment	40	9	94	11
Institutional Strengthening	32	7	82	9
Climate Change	31	7	5	1
Marine Resources	19	4	40	5
Freshwater Resources	13	3	29	3
Technology Transfer	10	2	30	3
Pollution Control	10	2	12	1
Primary Environmental Projects				
Total	452	100	869	100
Secondary Environmental Projects				
Total	113		470	
Grand Total	565		1339	

Technologies for sustainable development

Several programmes to disseminate environmentally sound technology have been set up since Rio. Within the Union, an important project is SPRINT, which aims to improve industrial effectiveness and efficiency by helping the smooth diffusion of new technologies. It published a manual on Good Practice in Managing Transnational Technology Transfer Networks in 1997.

The Indian Technology Information Centre was set up with Community assistance. It disseminates information on commercially proven and available technologies, focusing on industrial sectors which are particularly in need of cleaner technologies such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, pulp and paper, leather tanning, cement, and dye intermediates.

Phare and Tacis have supported the preparation and dissemination of the Environmental Action Programme for central and eastern Europe in many local languages. The Action Programme guides and informs governments in drawing up their specific national environmental action programmes which will channel scarce resources and capital towards the most urgent needs. In many cases, projects to introduce industrial “good housekeeping” practices have brought financial as well as health and environmental benefits to industries in these regions.

Science and education

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without scientific and technical progress. It is a common thread through the Community’s Fourth Research Framework Programme, affecting R&D in agriculture, environment, transport, industry, and materials. About ECU 1,080 million have been reserved for specifically environmental projects in the areas of climate change and marine science and technologies.

¹ “Primary environmental projects”, as defined by the evaluators, are those whose purpose and activities are aimed at achieving environmental improvements and managing and conserving natural resources. “Secondary environmental projects” are those economic sector projects which incorporated funding directed towards specific environmental activities. This table only takes account of the environmental component of secondary projects.

Community support for science and technology is open to cooperation with scientific institutions in countries outside the Union; for example, more than ECU 200 million were committed under the Third Framework Programme and other sources to more than 600 projects with central and eastern European partners. Many of these concerned environment, energy, and nuclear safety.

Support for sustainable development is a goal of scientific cooperation with developing countries. Today, ECU 232 million, or about 43% of the International Cooperation programme under the Fourth Framework Programme is reserved for cooperation with scientists in developing countries.

Several programmes provide funds for trainees, students and University staff to cooperate with or to spend periods of time in other Member States. Other schemes have extended these visiting and exchange programmes to include countries in central and eastern Europe and the CIS.

The role of information

Satisfactory guardianship of the environment can ultimately be assured only if policies are based on relevant, accurate and sufficient information.

For several years, the European Commission has been cooperating with the OECD to define environmental indicators that will better incorporate environmental conditions into national accounts. Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, takes part in several such activities. It recently conducted a pilot project which looked at 40 Sustainable Development Indicators in the European Union and summarised the results for the 5th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

The European Environment Agency was set up as an independent agency to provide objective, reliable and comparable information about the state of the environment across Europe. The EEA collaborated with scientists across the continent to draw up the first environmental assessment, published in 1995. *The Dobris Assessment*¹ established the baseline for environmental information and will be updated for the Environment Ministers Conference in Aarhus, in 1998. The European Environment Agency's first report on the state of the environment in the European Union will be published at the end of 1998.

But when the data is in hand, it still needs to be communicated to the people concerned. The 5th EAP is based on a recognition of the role of the general public as individuals and in private interest groups. Only when people are well-informed can they be asked to make responsible choices about the products they purchase, their lifestyles, and their future.

Today, many Community programmes contain an element of public information and communication about the environmental and social implications of the action.

¹ *Europe's Environment, The Dobris Assessment*, 1995.

5. FUTURE PLANS AND PROGRESS

“Today’s actions will dictate the environmental quality and economic sustainability of tomorrow.”¹

Over the past 30 years, the European Community has established a strong structure of law to protect the environment and to turn economic development towards a long-term sustainable path. This has been paralleled by a growing commitment to regional and global cooperation. As the Member States recognise the value of drawing closer together, the Union’s commitment to international cooperation is also deepening.

The European Union will take the lead on many issues of global environmental policy, and will work towards strengthening the institutions and tools of international cooperation, from the Commission on Sustainable Development to networks of local authorities in developing and developed countries.

Fostering sustainable development in poorer countries

Reaching the goal of sustainable development means that countries must integrate their environmental policies with economic sectors including manufacturing industry, transport, agriculture, energy and tourism. The process of broadening and deepening integration must take place at international as well as regional and national levels.

The European Union welcomes the increased flow of private investment to many of the poorer regions of the world, because this allows these societies to improve their environmental management in parallel with their economic growth. But it is important to find ways to channel these private flows into the environmental sectors and to ensure that all investments are environmentally sustainable.

It is time to increase efforts to use development aid to promote sustainable development, especially in the poorest and least developed countries. It is time to improve the quality of the Community’s aid. This requires further efforts to strengthen the environmental assessment of aid policies, programmes and projects.

Trade and environment

There is no inevitable conflict between international trade and environmental protection. In fact, strong environmental and sustainable development strategies can ensure that trade ultimately contributes to increased economic efficiency and thereby conserves resources and protects environmental quality. The positive relationship between modern efficient manufacturing and strong environmental management systems has been demonstrated repeatedly by successful companies.

The Community works closely with industrial states through a variety of fora, the most important being the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the OECD and regional and bilateral cooperation agreements. It seeks to develop common positions to ensure that trade and environment policies are mutually supportive in the context of both the WTO and in regional and interregional trade agreements.

Environmental protection requirements are also being integrated formally into Community trade policies. For example, environmental provisions are systematically included in trade agreements, new trade instruments have been created to encourage sustainable production in developing countries; and the European Community’s Generalized System of Preferences includes an environmental clause that will initially apply to wood products from sustainably managed forests.

¹ *Taking European Environment Policy into the 21st Century.*

Common cause on the European continent

Ten countries of central and eastern Europe have ratified "Europe" Agreements which are aimed at their eventual membership of the European Union. Enlargement is seen as both a political necessity and a historic opportunity by the Union's Heads of State, and the prospect of adding so many new members is a major element in the discussion of the reform of the Treaties which is expected to be concluded by the Inter-Governmental Conference in June 1997.

Environmental cooperation among the more than 36 European states was institutionalised through the "Environment for Europe" process, agreed by the Ministers of Environment in Dobris Castle, Czechoslovakia, in 1991. The Community was an enthusiastic supporter of this initiative and accepted responsibility for preparing regular reports on the state of the European Environment, the first of which was the *Dobris Assessment*, published in 1995.

The issues of deeper integration and ultimate accession will increasingly dominate the Community's priorities for relationships with central and eastern Europe in the near future; in particular, they include:

- to further develop a comprehensive approach to environment in the context of the accession strategy
- to continue cooperation within the framework of the Europe Agreements, including providing technical support and investment to improve environmental law and management in the region

The Community welcomes and promotes regional cooperation on environment by providing technical and financial support to regional programmes for example, concerning the Baltic Sea, the "Black Triangle" coal mining region between Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, the Danube River basin, the Black Sea and recently the Caspian Sea.

Common cause within the European Union

A common legal structure binds the Member States together with a set of common standards and procedures. A set of financial tools supports projects to improve environmental infrastructure, dialogue and the exchange of experience among local authorities, and the development and application of new, environmentally friendly technologies.

Like Agenda 21, the Community's 5th Environmental Action Programme has proved its validity over the past years. Some fine-tuning has been necessary, but the targets and measures set out in the 5th EAP will go a long way towards sustainability as they take effect.

One of the Community's highest priorities will be to ensure that its existing body of law is well implemented and strongly enforced in the Member States. It will be revising legislation to make it more consistent and coherent, and also strengthening reporting, monitoring and control procedures.

The 5th Environmental Action Programme will have five priority areas of action during 1997-2000:

- integration of the environment into other policy areas and economic sectors
- broadening the range of instruments government can use, in particular sectoral agreements with industry to achieve environmental clean up targets and taxes
- more efficient implementation and enforcement of environmental law and procedures
- improvement of information and strengthening the ability of the public and civil society to contribute to progress towards sustainable development
- strengthening international agreements and programmes.

In particular, the recent review of the 5th EAP identified several priorities for integrating the environment into economic activities:

- incorporating major environmental elements in future reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy, to integrate environmental concerns with market instruments and rural development and by reducing price supports
- measures to internalise external costs of transport and to promote better integration of land use and transport planning, in particular through the strategic environmental assessment of transport infrastructure plans for trans-European networks, tightening controls on emissions from motor vehicles, and promoting public transport
- supporting energy conservation and renewable energy, encouraging demand-side management measures and consumer awareness
- a strategy to achieve sustainable production and consumption patterns, and a special focus on the needs and role of small and medium-sized enterprises and environment
- monitoring and promoting measures to limit the pressures and impacts of tourism on the environment, especially in coastal zones, and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

ANNEX BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A Common Platform -: Guidelines for the European Union Preparation for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session to be held in New York in June 1997 to Review Agenda 21 and related Outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, Communication from the Commission COM(96).
- Environment in the European Union 1995*, European Environment Agency, ISBN 92-827-5263-1.
- EU-ACP Cooperation in 1994*, CF-AA-95-004-2A-C.
- EU-ACP Cooperation in 1995*, CF-AA-96-004-2A-C.
- First Report on Economic and Social Cohesion 1996*, Preliminary Edition, ISBN 92-827-8877-6.
- Guide, the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe*, 1996, Phare and Tacis Information Office, European Commission.
- Progress Report on the Implementation of the European Community Programme of policy and Action in relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development "Towards Sustainability*, Communication from the Commission COM(95) 624.
- Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision on the Review of the European Community Programme of policy and Action in relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development "Towards Sustainability"*, COM(95) 647.
- Report of the European Communities to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, ISBN 92-826-4169-4.
- Reports to CSD I, II, III and IV*, European Commission.
- Taking European Environment Policy into the 21st Century*, 1996, ISBN 92-827-6627-6.
- The Environment and the Regions: Towards Sustainability*, ISBN 92-827-4881-2.
- The Structural Funds in 1995, 7th Annual Report*, ISBN 92-827-8941-1.
- Towards Sustainable Transport Infrastructure; A sectoral approach in practice*, ISBN 92-827-7768-5.