



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

TAKING EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT POLICY INTO THE 21st CENTURY

A summary
of the European Commission's Progress Report and Action Plan
on the Fifth Programme of Policy and Action in Relation
to the Environment and Sustainable Development



Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1996

ISBN 92-827-6627-6

© ECSC-EC-EAEC, Brussels • Luxembourg, 1996

Reproduction is authorized, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged

Printed in Germany

TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

TAKING EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT POLICY INTO THE 21st CENTURY

A summary of the European Commission's Progress Report and Action Plan on the Fifth Programme of Policy and Action in Relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development



TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

-TAKING EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT POLICY INTO THE 21ST CENTURY -

	<i>page</i>
PREFACE.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
Integration.....	8
Shared responsibility.....	13
Broadening the range of policy instruments.....	13
Environmental themes	14
Implementation.....	19
The international dimension.....	19
WHERE NEXT?.....	21



On January 24 1996, the European Commission adopted an Action Plan to ensure more effective implementation of the European Union's Environment Strategy and Policies. To that end, the Union's 5th Action Programme on the Environment "Towards Sustainability" was updated and reviewed following an initiative of the responsible Member of the European Commission Ms Ritt BJERREGAARD.

Ms. Ritt Bjerregaard, was born in 1941. In 1971 she became a member of the Danish Parliament for the Social Democratic Party. Two years later, in 1973, she was appointed Minister of Education. Her second period as Minister of Education was during 1975 to 1978 and between 1979 and 1981 she was Minister of Social Affairs. From 1990 to 1995 when she took office in Brussels, Ritt Bjerregaard was Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts. Within the Social Democratic Party she chaired the Parliamentary Group for several years. Moreover, she has been a member of the Parliamentary Committees for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Environment.

Ritt Bjerregaard has always been active on the international scene. She has been Vice-president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In the years 1990 - 1995 she was a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Council of Europe. From 1992 to 1994 she was President of the Danish European Movement. She is currently a member of the Trilateral Commission.

In 1995 Ritt Bjerregaard was appointed Member of the European Commission, responsible for Environment and Nuclear Safety.

This publication contains a summarised version of the official documents related to Ms Bjerregaard's Action Plan and the Progress Report on implementation resulting from review of the 5th Action Programme.

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the European Union set itself an ambitious objective for the year 2000, responding to the Brundtland report, the Rio process and the new requirements of the Maastricht Treaty. This was to lay the foundations in the last years of this century for achieving sustainable development in the next, in the sense of economic and social development for current and future generations which ensures the continuity of our ecosystems.

Previously, the primary response to environmental problems had been to focus on correcting environmental problems as they arose. Now a deliberate and concerted effort would be made to approach environment policy through those actors whose decisions most affected the environment. If those who were responsible for decision-making in the energy field, to take one sector, could truly integrate the principle of sustainable development into their actions, then this would enable simultaneous achievement of energy and environment objectives.

The long-term goal of transforming the European economy into one whose development would be sustainable for generations to come was set out in the Fifth Programme of Policy and Action in Relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development. This was developed as a road map for the different routes leading the European economy towards sustainable development.

Approaching the half-way point in the Fifth Programme's timetable for implementation, it was natural that the European Union would wish to take a long and hard look at the performance in implementing different

parts of the Fifth Programme. However, there were other important reasons for carrying out such a review.

Since the Fifth Programme's adoption, significant new developments influencing European Union and Member States' environmental policy practice and direction have occurred.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and its Agenda 21 set new objectives for national and regional environment policy and these were being taken forward in a number of fora at the international level notably the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the First Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Berlin.

The accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden has helped reinforce the political will to move towards sustainable development.

Rapid political change in Central and Eastern Europe has raised awareness of serious environmental problems on the European Union's doorstep while providing unprecedented opportunities for helping these countries onto a path of sustainable economic development. This was one of the major agenda points addressed by Environment Ministers from all over Europe at the Sofia Conference held in October 1995.

Two European Union policies with an important impact on the environment - agriculture and regional development - have been reformed and, in so doing, have helped to

start to refocus farmers and other local economic operators towards working with the environment as opposed to against it.

With these events as the backdrop, the European Commission adopted on 10 January 1996 a Progress Report on the implementation of the Fifth Programme. It serves not only to point to areas of success but also, and more importantly, it helps to identify the specific policy areas and types of action where current efforts and results are insufficient if sustainable development is to be achieved across the board.

The Report looks at developments of European Union actions in achieving the goals and targets of the Fifth Programme. The focus of the Programme was deliberately much broader covering actions to be taken at the levels of the Member State, the region, economic actors as well as the European citizen. The Report analyses progress in these areas as well and indicates at which level action needs to be taken most urgently.

The European Environment Agency's updated Report on the State of the Environment in the EU also reviews developments and more importantly assesses the impact that these measures are having. The Agency's report was developed in parallel to the Progress Report and is another important pillar on which the European Union institutions, the Member States and the regional and local authorities will be able to set their future priorities. In short, the Agency has already served a key role in providing a much clearer picture of what is happening on the ground and further analysis of progress can only be helped by ongoing

efforts to harmonise data collection in the Member States and regions so that a comparable and focused set of data is at hand.

This summary covers the Commission's main conclusions and, in particular, the major areas of concern which the Commission has identified in its Progress Report. It therefore, by necessity, focuses on broad issues and trends. For details on specific policy issues, the reader should refer to the Progress Report itself (COM(95) 624 final, adopted by the Commission on 10 January 1996).

This paper also covers the main elements of the Action Plan with priority areas at Union level the Commission has proposed on the basis of the Progress Report and the Agency's Report. For details the reader should refer to the Action Plan itself (COM(95) 647 final, adopted by the Commission on 24 January 1996).



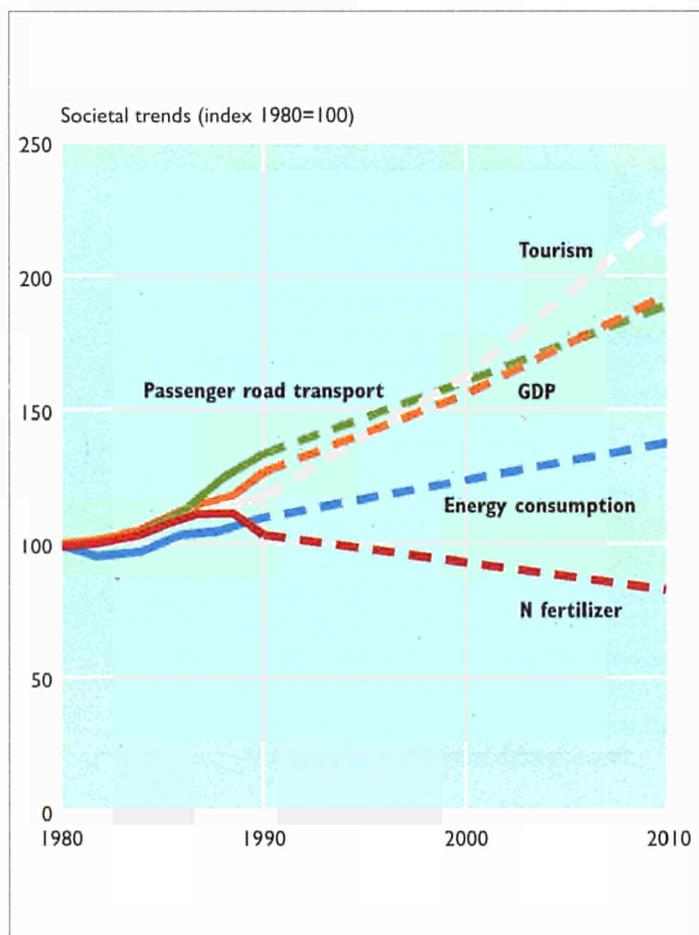
INTEGRATION

"Integration of environmental considerations into the different target sectors has made progress but at varying speeds".

A major plank of the Fifth Programme is to integrate the environment into policy and practice in five key areas (referred to as "target sectors"): manufacturing, transport, energy, agriculture and tourism. If environmental considerations could be built into policy development and decision-making in these areas, then this would help prevent environmental problems from occurring and avoid having to carry out comparatively costly environmental controls (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Societal trends in the European Union /GDP, passenger road transport, energy consumption, nitrogen fertiliser use and tourism) and current scenarios.

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1995.



Manufacturing Industry:

"In spite of the recession, encouraging progress has been made (by industry) towards achieving the Fifth Programme's aims".

There are many cases where companies have started to respond positively to the integration of environmental policy into the legislative framework governing the actions of manufacturing industry. This is partly because industry has seen, over the last 20 years in particular, that it can grow and actively benefit from environmental regulation and not see it as a threat. At the same time, industry has lengthy experience of addressing environmental requirements, having been forced to comply with the growing body of environmental legislation. Since the start of the Fifth Programme, a positive industry approach towards environmental policy has been more in evidence. Industrial companies are increasingly targeting waste minimisation, clean production and energy conservation technologies for economic as well as environmental reasons. Such measures not only bring down raw material and production costs but also help to minimise expensive clean-up and possible liability for environmental damage.

In parallel, the environmental services sector has continued to grow and the employment potential for this sector, which currently employs 1.6 million people in the EU, is likely to continue growing. The sector is now estimated to be worth \$250 billion worldwide and is expected to expand by 6%-8% per annum.

Industry has on the whole responded well to the Fifth Programme in reducing emissions, where legislation has existed for twenty years and where the economic advantages were quickly seen. The European Union has been able to push through legislation which until recently would have seemed highly radical and ambitious. Some notable successes: the European Union's Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) was adopted and is up and running; the first European ecolabels have been awarded and, perhaps most significantly for manufacturing industry, legislation has been agreed on industrial plant emissions, with emphasis on an integrated approach to their control



so that different agencies avoid setting conflicting standards.

The Progress Report does, however, highlight one particular area of doubt as to manufacturing industry's ability and willingness to integrate the concept of sustainable development into its every day actions and thinking and this concerns small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For many SMEs, their customers, at one end of the scale, the larger firms and at the other end, individual EU citizens, are putting increasing demands on SMEs to deliver on environment as well as product quality and price. Hence there is a distinct danger that SMEs who choose not to integrate the environment into their operations will be edged out of markets due to their customers' demands for improved environmental performance. As a result, technological and financial assistance is being provided to SMEs in a number of Member States and to a certain extent at EU level. However, integration of environment into SMEs will only happen if the SMEs make the leap and start to take on this responsibility for themselves.

In Denmark, SMEs have been the main beneficiaries of Danish Cleaner Technology Action Plans. The Danish Environmental Protection Agency and, in some regions, the European Union's Regional Fund help fund consultancy technical advice to companies in order to develop cleaner production processes. At EU level, a distinct SME accent has also been put on implementation of the eco-audit and eco-label schemes.

Transport:

"Most basic elements for measures and instruments for a more sustainable transport sector are already identified in the Fifth Programme. The growth in traffic presents a major problem. It is a complex task to overcome the obstacles and to curb the trend".

If industry is proving to be the most receptive of the Fifth Programme's sectors targeted for conversion to sustainable development, the Progress report identifies transport as one sector where integration of the concept of sustainable development is proving to be the most difficult .

While it is increasingly recognised that current trends in transport, and in particular road transport, are unsustainable, the environmental impact from



In Ireland, the Dublin Transportation Initiative (DTI) is putting in place the foundations for a sustainable transportation system and is allocating in the period up until end-1999 just over half of its £600 million budget to public transport and traffic management measures. The DTI follows the integration approach by ensuring that transportation policy is inter-related with other policies such as land use, economic development, urban renewal, employment and environment.

vehicles continues to grow. NO_x, particulates and CO₂ emissions are on the increase in spite of improvements in emissions technology and the tightening of vehicle emissions standards as and when lower emission limits become achievable. Indeed, the expected substantial growth in CO₂ emissions from transport will undermine the EU's CO₂ strategy more than any other sector.

It is clear that the Fifth Programme's objective of internalising the environmental costs of transport through taxes and charges has not, on the whole, been put into practice. This is despite a growing consensus that only appropriate price signals can make transport compatible with environmental objectives. At the same time, Member State and Union efforts to encourage shifts in the use of modes of transport have so far not been effective.

Energy:

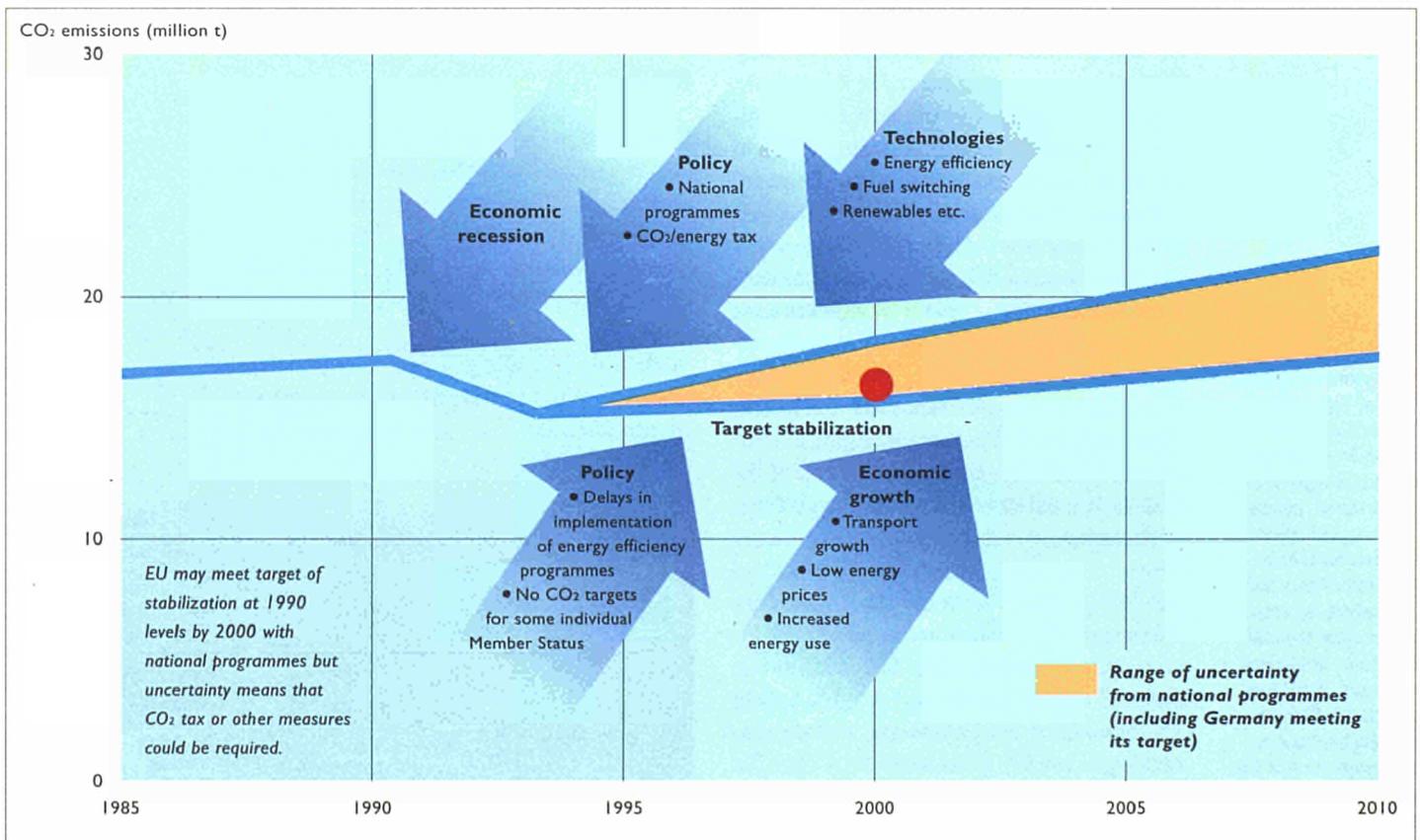
"The Programme's approach to energy remains as valid today as at the time of its inception,...(however,) new ideas and solutions have to be identified to complement those already highlighted".

Energy policy measures of benefit to the environment were well in evidence before the launch of the Fifth Programme. Indeed, measures to improve energy efficiency were an integral part of the response to the oil crisis in the early 1970's. However, the environmental policy response to energy pollution tended to be restricted to technical regulations (in particular with a view to combatting air pollution and acid rain) and did not require much integration of energy and environment policies.

The biggest challenge for the energy and environment is compliance with the EU's agreed objective of stabilising CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. This can only be achieved through improved energy efficiency and a switch to low or non-carbon fuels. The Commission's proposal for a framework for an energy/CO₂ tax remains a key objective in this context. Expansion of the energy

Figure2: Progress towards CO₂ stabilisation in the EU 12.

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1995.



In 1990 the Community launched a pilot action to improve energy management at regional and urban levels. This action provides assistance in energy management to local authorities in regions, islands and in cities. Examples of instances where action was carried out are the Ionian Islands (Greece), the island of Bornholm (Denmark), the regions of Shropshire (UK); Donegal (Ireland); Alt Urgell (Spain) and Limousin (France), and the cities of Cremona (Italy), Leipzig and Mainz (Germany), and Manchester (UK). In this way, the action contributes to the integration of energy into local plans for sustainable development and supports local and regional environmental activities.

efficiency programme, SAVE, is another element to achieving this objective, as is Union development of alternative and renewable energy technologies under the ALTENER and JOULE-THERMIE programmes (see figure 2).

Further evidence of the increasingly important and integrated role that environmental concerns have been playing in the development of energy policy in recent years can be found in the Green Paper "For a European Union Energy Policy" adopted by the Commission in January 1995. This Paper places the environment alongside security of supply and industrial competitiveness, as one of the three pillars on which European Union energy policy is to be founded. This has been taken further forward by the recent White Paper on Energy Policy, which will lead to several new initiatives addressing climate change and the traditional forms of energy sector pollution. In this respect, the integration of environmental costs into energy costs is being further developed.

Agriculture and forestry:

Agriculture:

"There has been progress towards integrating the EU agriculture and environmental policies since 1992, when both a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was agreed and the Fifth Action Programme was adopted. Although certain new instruments under the CAP take better account of the environment, it is still too early to measure their effects. On the other hand, the CAP reform in 1992 did little to systematically integrate environmental concerns".

Potentially important environmental benefits are likely to result from the CAP reform's agri-environmental action programme, which amongst other measures encourages farmers to produce less intensively. However, of perhaps more immediate beneficial effect has been the reduction in price support levels and increased set-aside which have sent the clear signal to farmers to produce less and to start to reduce the volume and toxicity of chemical inputs. This is a clear example of how changing the price signals can be the most effective policy option in terms of short-term benefit to the environment.

While a turning point may have been reached in the CAP's relationship with environment policy considerations, there is still a long way to go before European agriculture can be viewed to be on the path towards sustainable development. For example, the effects of agriculture on water quantity and quality (in particular levels of nitrate and pesticide levels in groundwater) are issues still some way from being adequately addressed.

Organic farming is the focal point of Austria's sustainable agriculture objectives. Organic farming practices were introduced as early as 1920 in Austria. Now, due to growing consumer demand it is a widely accepted alternative to conventional farming both in production and market terms. A survey of Austrian farmers showed that motivations to introduce organic farming include lifestyle changes, increased nutritional and health consciousness, and an increase in illnesses, problems encountered with chemical plant protection inputs, predominantly fertilisers, soil fertility problems and sickness or fertility problems with farm animals.



In Finland, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management have been developed at national level. In 1995 a programme was launched to develop regional and local criteria and ecological and socio-economic indicators with a view to their application in strategic planning, sustainable forest management and timber certification systems.

Forestry:

"A more coherent approach is needed to link forestry issues and other EU policies such as the CAP, Regional Policy, together with particular instruments such as the Habitats Directive or atmospheric legislation".

Current actions (e.g. in the research and atmospheric pollution areas) are likely to need reinforcement in view of undertakings made at Rio with regard to sustainable forestry development and further commitments stemming from a future Convention. The accession of Sweden and Finland, doubling the EU's forestry land cover, heightens the increased importance of this policy area.

Tourism:

"Evidence of some progress in integrating environment and tourism can be seen, but the objectives of the Fifth Programme and the measures and the instruments have not yet been implemented thoroughly or on time".

The challenge of sustainable development is already evident for the tourism sector in the increasing number of EU citizens who are taking the quality of the environment into account in their choice of holiday destination. However, it is more than the rise of the eco-consumer that makes the case for the sustain-

able development of the tourism sector. Investments in tourist infrastructure are long-term investments which by definition should be sustainable. Environmental issues such as drinking water availability and quality, bathing water quality and wildlife protection are all economic issues for the tourist industry in terms of its long-term sustainability.

Some Member States are currently attempting to control mass tourism so as to preserve the environments upon which tourism thrives. Constraints on the over-exploitation of nature areas serve to ensure that new recreation developments only take place in multi-use designated areas. Examples of this include the number of berths available for the construction of marinas, access to pleasure boating areas e.g. in Wadden Sea), and maximum lengths for forest paths in the Netherlands. Portugal and Austria recently completed studies on the impact of tourism on the environment, and on tourism and initiatives for nature and environment protection respectively.



Shared responsibility

“Further strengthening of the shared responsibility approach will be important for the effective implementation of the Fifth Programme in the future”.

The Fifth Programme recognised that the EU would probably fall short of achieving sustainable development if environment policy was restricted to the environment policy regulator, whether at the EU, Member State, regional or local level. It was up to others, outside the traditional environmental policy circles and at all levels, to take on board and integrate the concept of sustainable development into their actions of their own accord.

Those involved in the targeted sectors would need to start to think of the environment in terms of it being an economic asset as opposed to a restraint to growth. This would challenge farmers and agricultural policy officials, for example, to take a longer term view of the viability of the farming sector. Similarly, it would require product manufacturers to build environmental considerations into product design because it makes economic sense to waste less material resources and use less energy. Only with this broad degree of acceptance could the sustainable development process begin to take hold.

A number of initiatives to take the concept of shared responsibility forward have been undertaken since the Fifth Programme's inception. On one level there was a need to improve dialogue amongst and within Member State governments. At another level, the participation in environmental decision-

making of industry, business, interest groups and the public in general was viewed as crucial.

The Commission's General Consultative Forum on the Environment was set up at the beginning of 1994. Consisting of 32 eminent personalities, its role is to advise the Commission on issues relating to sustainable development. Its main aim is to provide a place for consultation and dialogue between representatives of the various actors of the Fifth Programme. In 1995 it produced a set of principles of sustainable development and it has advised the Commission on the review process of the Fifth Programme.

In several Member States, local government has developed sustainable development strategies through a partnership with all sectors of the local community. These strategies, which aim to integrate the environment into local administrations' policies and activities, stem from the Rio Conference's Agenda 21 which called on local authorities to adopt, by 1996, Local Agenda 21 initiatives.

In conclusion, although many of the necessary mechanisms (e.g. interministerial and consultative groups) are now in place, there are signs that the necessary political commitment to make shared responsibility a reality may be lacking. In this respect, it is widely believed that the concept of shared responsibility has yet to take hold and needs to be further developed.

For example, in Leicester in the UK, focus groups have been established under the Environment City work programme to address the needs of the city and develop projects which can contribute to a 30 year strategic plan to make the development in Leicester sustainable. The Commission strongly supports such initiatives, in particular where EU-wide networking, such as the cooperation fostered by the Sustainable Cities Campaign, can help local players share and learn from each other's experiences

Broadening the range of environment policy instruments

“There will be a continuing need for legislation to establish fundamental levels of environmental protection, to adhere to international commitments or to preserve the integrity of the internal market. ... however... in order to bring about substantial changes in current trends, practices and attitudes and to involve all sectors of society in line with the principle of shared responsibility, in addition to and complementary to

legislation, a broader mix of instruments needs to be developed and applied”.

The Fifth Programme developed the concept of broadening the range of policy instruments for the environment. If environmental objectives were achievable through alternative approaches to the traditional solution of legislation, then these alternatives should be promoted. Such approaches can prove to be less costly, can be easier to implement

more quickly and effectively (e.g. fiscal incentives/disincentives) and can be achieved through greater consensus (e.g. through voluntary agreements). Some of these alternatives have been in increasing evidence in the three years since implementation of the Fifth Programme began.

Environment is an increasingly strong component of European Community Structural Funding. In agriculture, farmers are just starting to see the benefit of tapping into funding opportunities in return for adopting agri-environmental programmes (introduced under the 1992 CAP Reform). European Union regional policy has also become an important vehicle for translating environmental policy objectives into on-the-ground realities and for involving environment authorities in projects and plans eligible for Union funding. Just under a billion ECUs were allocated to environment projects under the European Union's Cohesion Fund in 1994 alone. Environment is also integrated into regional funding for urban renewal. Since its operational beginnings in December 1992, the European Union environmental funding system, LIFE has made increasing contributions to nature protection, the promotion of production and behavioural models which are in line with the principles of sustainable development..

Broadening the range of policy instruments also involves introducing supporting measures to the legislative process. For instance, the development of a systematic programme of environmental statis-

tics is under way while cost-benefit analysis has become part and parcel of Commission proposals.

Market-based instruments are seen as the most important group of tools (from environmental taxes/charges to fiscal exemptions and adjustments) available for future action to 'get the prices right' by incorporating environmental costs into the price of goods and services. Despite this, there has been very little progress on the development of such instruments at EU level. And yet where such instruments have been introduced in Member States, they have often had an impressive effect.

Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden have introduced a CO₂/energy tax. In Denmark, before the introduction of the tax, excise duties had already been imposed on energy products. The Finnish carbon tax was split into a "fiscal" component with tax differentiation for diesel and petrol and a "carbon/energy" component. Retail sales of pesticides are taxed in Denmark and product taxes exist on plastic and paper bags and on CFCs and halons. In Sweden a fertiliser tax has been charged since 1984. In the Netherlands, a surplus manure tax is levied on the production of animal manure. Finland imposes a municipal user charge on waste, a waste oil charge (domestic), a hazardous waste processing charge (municipalities and businesses) and a nuclear waste management charge.

Environmental themes

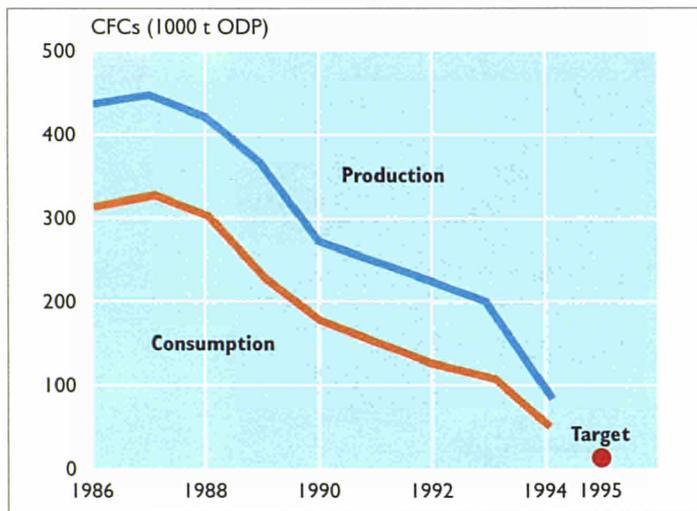
"In relation to the specific themes of the programme, there has been progress in the right direction in a number of areas (as is confirmed by the updated State of the Environment Report of the European Environment Agency) - reduction of ozone depleting substances, emissions of heavy metals and sulphur dioxide, improvements in approaches to nature protection, surface water quality, industry-related risks and waste. Particular attention now needs to be paid to developing improved approaches to climate change and acidification, urban issues, including air quality, noise and waste, together with a comprehensive strategy to ground water and surface water resources".

The Fifth Programme identified a number of environmental themes which would need to be addressed head on. Some of these themes have been the subject of substantial progress since the Programme's inception, while for others a new approach is now required.

Climate change could dominate policy thinking and making in the twenty-first century. And yet so far progress in addressing this challenge has been limited. There is great uncertainty about whether the EU will meet its target of freezing CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Moreover, the target to improve energy efficiency by 20% over the period 1986-1995 is likely to be only half achieved. The integration of climate change concerns into energy and transport pricing mechanisms

Figure 3: Production and consumption of CFCs in the EU 12.

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1995.



also continues to present political difficulties with the result that increasing emissions from the ever-growing transport sector jeopardize any gains already made.

The EU has made significant progress in phasing-out **ozone-depleting substances** (ODS's). Halons production and consumption came to an end in 1993 while all uses of CFCs have been prohibited since 1995 (see figure 3). However, the global nature of this problem means that efforts will have

to be stepped up to enable less-developed countries to reduce their consumption of ODS's through technology transfer.

With regard to **acidification and air quality**, reduction targets for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ammonia, the main causes of acid rain, have been adopted in certain Member States (see also figures 4 and 5). A major European Union measure, the Framework Directive on ambient air quality has been the subject of political agreement in the Council. In spite of this progress, it is estimated that, by the year 2000, acid deposition will still exceed critical loads in a large number of (mainly Northern) regions. Further emissions reduction levels will have to be agreed if concentrations are to remain below these critical loads.

Water is beginning to show some sign of qualitative improvement. In particular, measures to control urban and industrial organic waste are being introduced. The Commission has undertaken a thorough examination of the existing EU water legislation with a view to revising it in the light of scientific and technical progress and of the principle of subsidiarity. This review has led in 1995 to proposals for new legislation on the quality of drinking water and for amending legislation on the quality of bathing water (see also photo 6). Agricultural pollution has yet to be sufficiently addressed and the available quantity of fresh water for industrial,

Figure 4: Progress towards NO_x target.

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1995.

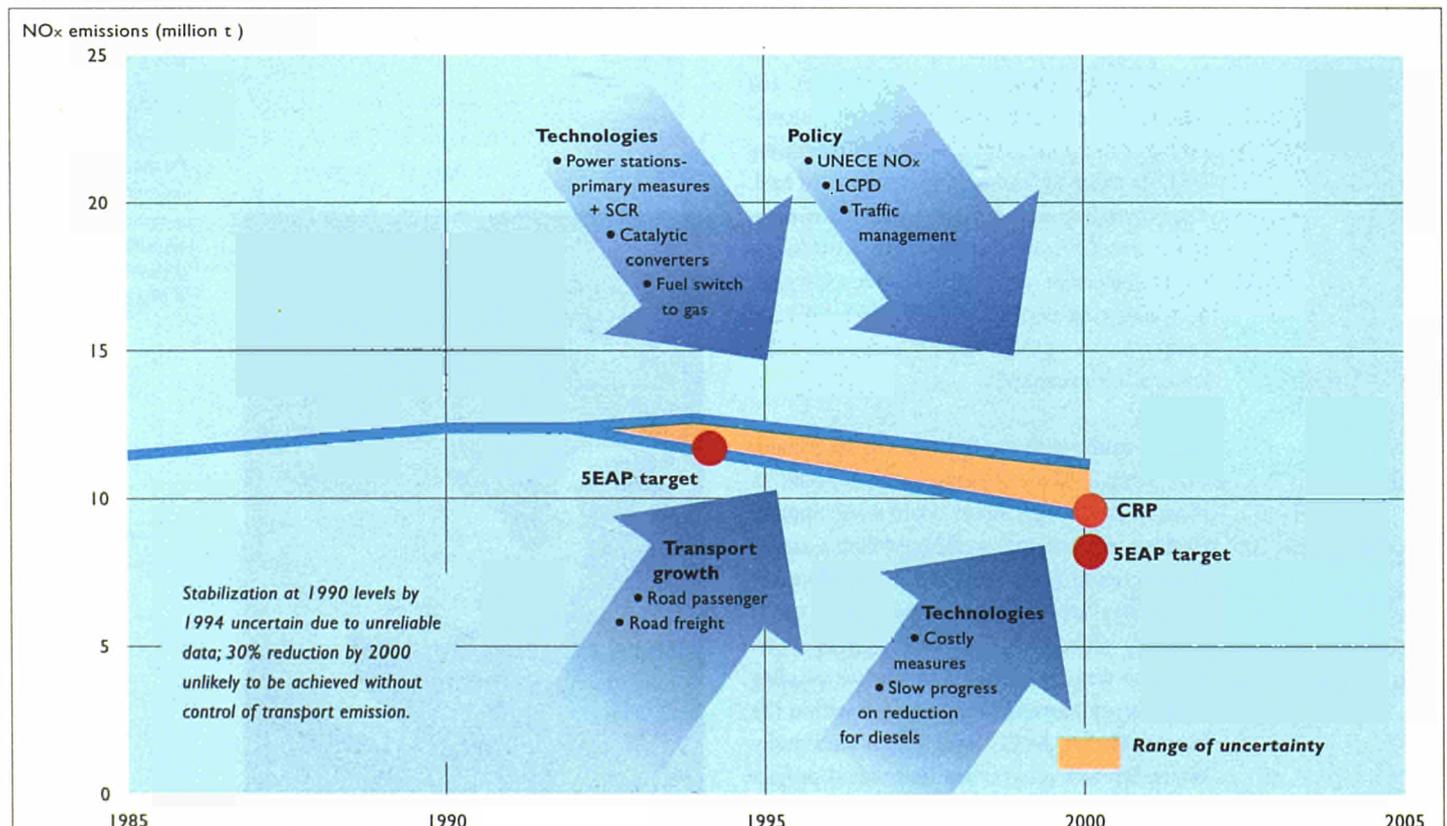
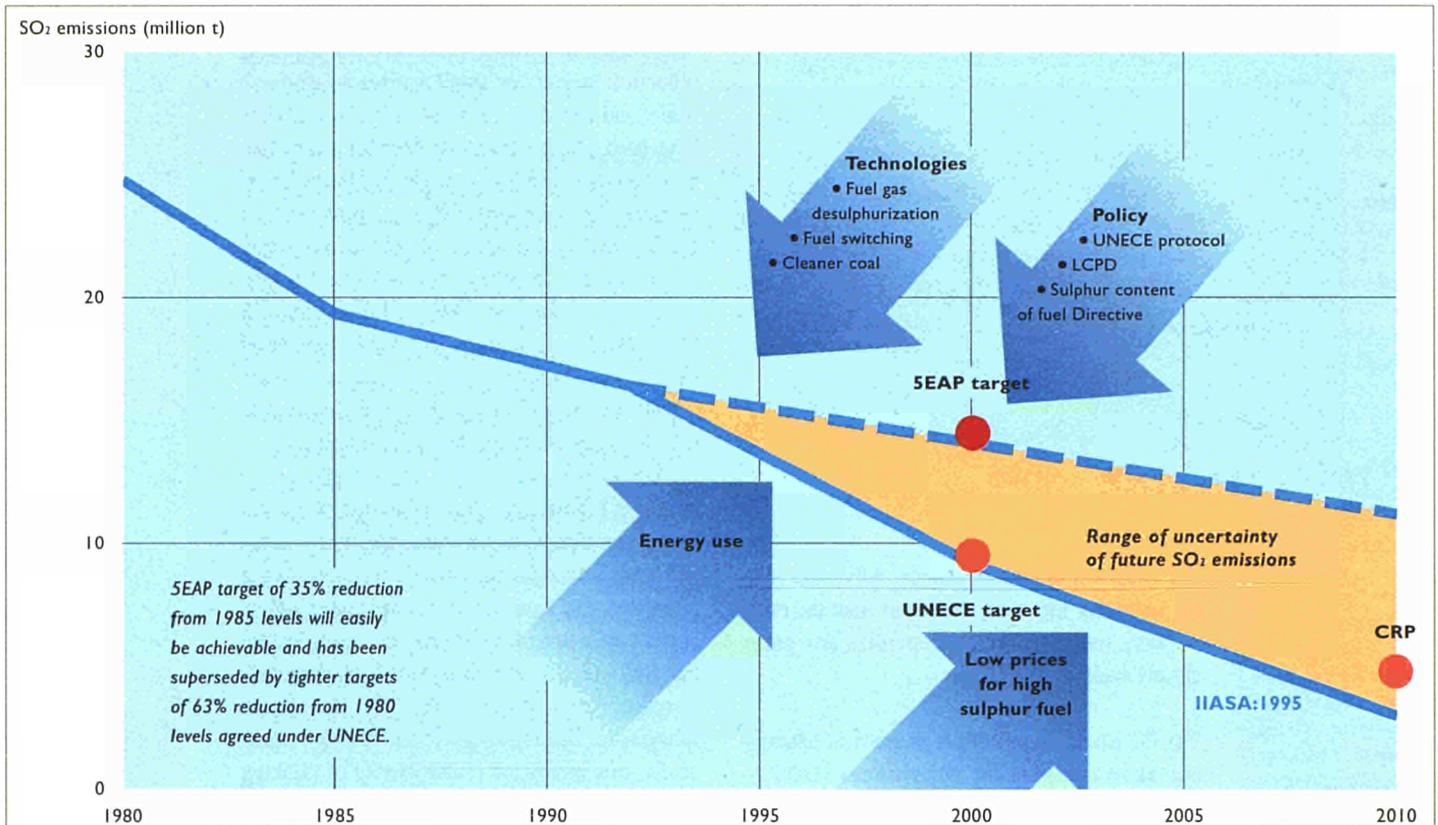


Figure 5: Progress towards SO₂ target.

SOURCE: ENVIRONMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1995.



agricultural and household consumption is an increasing problem in some regions of the EU. An integrated approach to managing the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater is currently being prepared at the EU level.

More and more, the **urban environment** is being addressed as an issue requiring specific policy and management approaches. Local initiatives will remain the key response to urban environmental renewal through measures ranging from prioritising public transport to rehabilitating contaminated land. The EU can help cities learn from each others experience through networking and can assist in the implementation of specific projects through regional funding programmes such as URBAN. A more comprehensive approach for EU actions on urban issues is being developed.

Waste management continues to be a major environmental policy challenge (see also figure 7). Much of the EU legal framework on waste management has been adopted. At the same time, a variety of responses to waste issues is being developed in the Member States including waste taxes, re-use or recovery schemes and voluntary agreements. Attention therefore needs to be paid to avoiding unnecessary barriers being erected within the Internal Market. At EU level, within the Priority Waste Streams programme, individual project

groups comprising all interested parties have developed analyses and recommendations on a number of waste streams. A major review of waste policy measures is currently being planned with a view to adjusting the EU waste policy framework for the next century.

In Luxembourg, the "Superdréckskëscht" action covers the collection and the disposal of problematic domestic waste, including paint, car batteries, consumer batteries, waste oil, pharmaceutical products, grease, aerosol cans, and solvents. The goal is to maximise recycling and recovery of materials, as required by a law of 17 June 1994 on the prevention and disposal of waste.

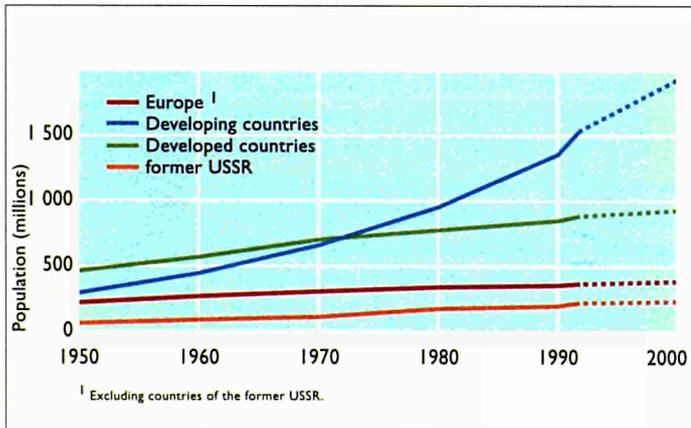


Spain is preparing a strategy for the integrated conservation of nature addressing all activities and focusing on nature, water resources, agri-climate and fishing. At the EU level, the Birds and Habitats Directive (the latter adopted in 1994), together with LIFE, have been the major vehicles of nature protection policy.



Figure 6: Current and projected urban population by region, 1950-2000.

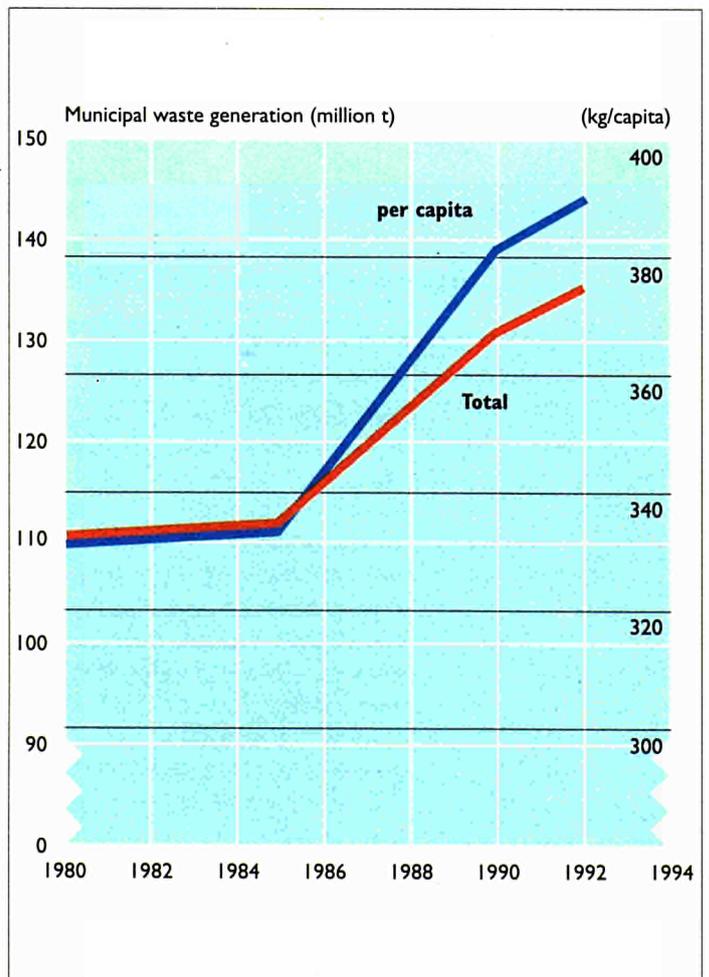
SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS 1991



At the Member State level, many **nature protection** initiatives are in operation. The Fifth Programme set the target of creating Natura 2000, a European network of protected areas. However, slow transposition of the Habitats Directive, in particular concerning Member State transmission of the lists of protected sites and relevant data, is undermining the basis for proposing a definitive Natura 2000 list of sites.

Figure 7: Municipal waste generation in the EU12.

SOURCE: EEUROSTAT/OECD, 1995.





Excessive exposure to **noise** was identified in the Fifth Programme as a major pressing environmental problem in urban areas, the main sources being road traffic, followed by neighbourhood and aircraft noise (see also figure 8). While noise abatement is primarily a local management issue, at the Member State level, noise abatement programmes have been launched in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, the UK and Germany. At the EU level noise limits have been adopted for vehicles, aircraft and machinery. A more systematic approach to noise emissions will need to be developed integrating noise exposure considerations.

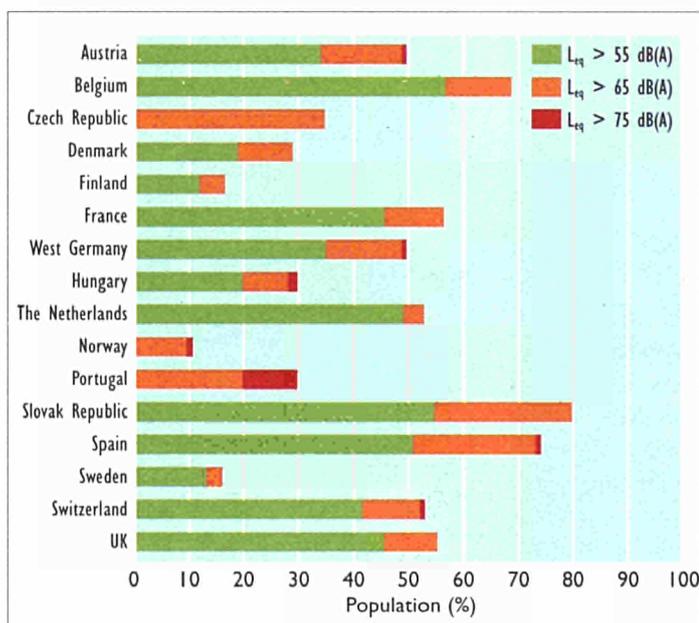
As with urban environment and noise, **coastal zone protection** is a horizontal environmental theme (in that it touches on a number of sectors, including agriculture and, notably, tourism) for which the primary responsibility lies with local and regional authorities. Integrated coastal zone management is an approach which will require increased public awareness as well as more systematic exchanges of information and experiences at the local and regional levels.

In the field of coastal zone management France's Conservatoire du Littoral, a public organisation for the protection of France's coastal and inland water zones, is empowered to acquire and protect ecologically fragile water zones and can take action in French coastal and inland water zones as well as in the French Overseas Territories. Once purchased, these sites cannot be re-sold nor can they be closed to the public, unless deemed necessary for ecological reasons. Grants to the Conservatoire have become tax-deductible since the beginning of 1995.

Figure 8: noise exposure due to road traffic.

SOURCE: VON MEIER, 1993(BASED ON OECD AND WHO DATA).

Note: Where data were available for certain countries from both the OECD and WHO, OECD data were selected, as that survey covered more European countries. Original values for France, West Germany and Hungary were daytime levels L_{10} , and then converted to L_{24h} .



Implementation

“Member States ultimately determine the effectiveness of Union measures. There are delays and failures in properly transposing directives into national law, and in some cases failure to enforce compliance with the transposed law. Late transposition of legislation remains an endemic problem in a majority of Member States”.

New legislation is being drafted and existing legislation revised with a view to make final implementation easier. In line with decisions made at the December 1992 Edinburgh Summit, work is continuing to simplify European Union legislation by removing unnecessary procedures, defining cost-effective techniques and linking legislation to market-based instruments.

The Commission is increasingly working more closely with the Member States in the management of legislative transposal and conformity as well as practical implementation issues. There is some evidence of more practical follow-through on some new legislation. For instance, there have been a series of seminars on the implementation of the Habitats Directive.

The international dimension

“An open multilateral trading system offers the possibility of a more efficient use of natural resources in both economic and environmental terms, and thereby could contribute to reducing pressures on the environment. But this will only occur if safeguards are established at the national and international levels to limit the environmental damage associated with the increased economic activity resulting from trade liberalisation”.

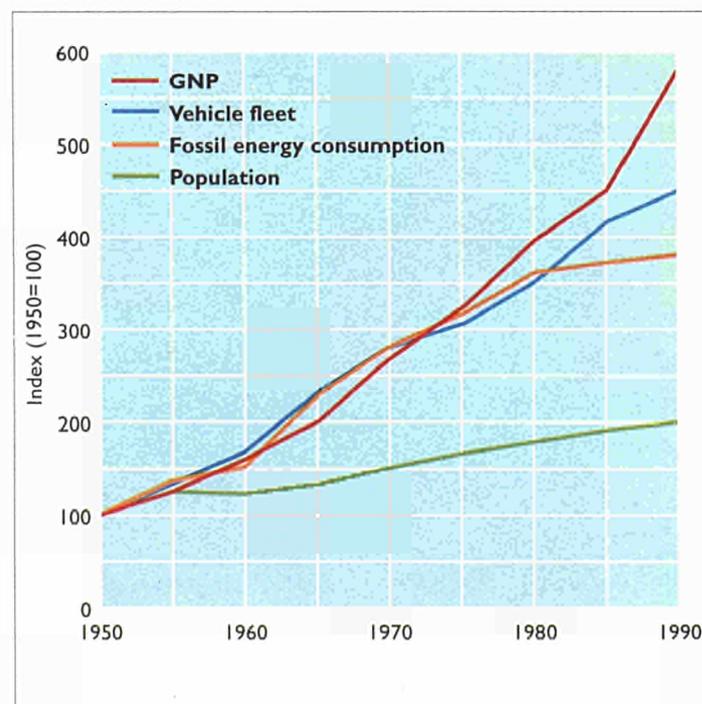
International agreements and the international context in general are increasingly important dimensions to European Union environmental policy. The EU cannot achieve sustainable development in isolation. Shared responsibility needs to take place at a world level (see also figure 9). For example, the beneficial impact in terms of ozone layer protection of the EU phase-out of CFCs could be completely lost if CFC replacement technologies are not shared with the developing countries.

The UNCED process and its follow-up through the UN Commission on Sustainable Development are an essential part of moving towards global sustainable development. Since 1992, the European Union has been integrating targets set in Agenda 21 into its policy-making (e.g. in the areas of climate change and biodiversity).

The Union is playing an active role in international negotiations and is increasingly acting as a catalyst within the international structures. However, efforts

Figure 9: Trends in world population, GNP, fossil energy consumption and vehicle fleet, 1950-90.

SOURCE: RIVM, 1992; UNEP, 1989, 1993.



to make progress have been undermined recently in that there has been a setback in terms of flows of financial resources to assist developing countries in moving towards sustainable development.

The Union is an active participant in the World Trade Organisation's Committee on Trade and Environment in finding ways and means to integrate trade and environment policies to make them mutually supportive.

Environment is also high up the agenda in the EU's relations with its neighbouring countries, in particular in Central and Eastern European but also in the Mediterranean and Baltic regions. This is in the EU's interest for a number of reasons. The environmental problems are serious enough to be barriers to the future economic and political stability which these countries are striving for. Pollution is no respecter of national boundaries so clean-up in neighbouring countries can help improve environmental quality in the EU. Moreover, Central and Eastern European countries which have applied to

join the EU will need to take in due course on board the existing body of EU environmental regulation.

For Central and Eastern Europe, environment is an integral element of Union funding through the PHARE programme. European Union environmental assistance is likely to increase further with the extension of the LIFE Fund to cover Central and Eastern Europe in its second phase (1996-99).



WHERE NEXT?

From the Commission's Progress Report, it is clear that much is being done to turn the EU economy around so that it is heading towards sustainable development. However, as can be expected, the Commission's assessment highlights areas of success, areas where the jury is still out, as well as areas where there is much room for improvement.

The Fifth Programme represented a significant shift from standard environmental policy approaches. Environmental problems resulted from an unsustainable economic model and, although it would continue to be important to focus on these problem areas, it would be far more efficient to focus other actors in other policy areas on the economy/environment interface. Should not environmental pollution be viewed as a hidden cost to the economy? Was not 'end of pipe' environmental clean-up an expensive option compared to upstream investment in clean production? Would not a longer-term, sustainable view of economic development be better for the economy as well as for the environment?

The last three years have if anything confirmed the principles behind the Fifth Programme. This is true even for transport, the sector identified as the one which has developed the least sustainably since the Fifth Programme's inception. It is now clear that continued tightening of vehicle emissions is not in itself going to solve the problems besetting the transport sector. Certain pollutants are on the increase while other emissions already controlled are set to increase in view of the projected rise in the numbers of vehicles on the road. There are clear economic reasons for seeking fundamental change in the transport sector and it is clearly up to those in the transport sector to devise strategies to resolve these problems in a sustainable way.

The picture which emerges from the Progress Report is that, encouragingly, many of the elements needed to take this overall strategy forward are now either in place or are at least in the pipeline. However, at the same time, there are doubts whether the political will to implement the strategy is still there. In 1992, at the time of the Rio Conference and the adoption of the Fifth Programme, environmental concerns were climbing the political agenda fast. Since then, stalemate over the adoption of economic and fiscal instruments at Union level

and hesitation to honour some international funding commitments are signs that there are serious question marks as to whether support for sustainable development can be translated from words into specific actions. In short, we are at a turning point and the road to sustainable development is likely to become more difficult from here on.

It is in this context, that the Commission submitted on 24 January 1996 an Action Plan, which outlines priority areas at the Union level, to be agreed by the Council and European Parliament under the co-decision procedure. The proposed Action Plan reinforces the existing Fifth Programme strategy and indicates where the EU should step up efforts with a view, in particular, to strengthening integration, broadening the policy instrument base, improving implementation, reinforcing the EU's international role and raising broader awareness of sustainable development issues.

The proposed Action Plan sets out the priorities which the Commission sees as necessary if the Fifth Programme's central objective - to lay the foundations for achieving sustainable development - is to be realised. Actions at the Member State, regional and local levels are equally important parts of the Fifth Programme strategy but cannot be the subject of an Action Plan to be decided upon at EU level. In line with the principles of subsidiarity and shared responsibility, it is up to the actors at those levels to ensure that the Fifth Programme is fully implemented where they have responsibility.

In coming forward with the Action Plan, the Commission has proposed that the EU should move up a gear in its drive towards sustainability. In particular, the Commission foresees a redoubling of efforts towards integrating sustainable development into the industry, transport, energy, agriculture and tourism sectors. In these sectors, the aim is to leave behind the present concept of economic growth. Future social and economic development will only be possible on the basis of ensuring a good quantity and quality of natural resources.

In the context of Common Agriculture Policy reform, the Commission is committed to develop further links between agricultural market instruments and environmental requirements with reduced reliance on market price support

Integration

compensated by direct aid measures which, where appropriate, could be linked to environmental considerations.

The Commission has already tabled policy documents on transport and energy policy which include a demand-side management approach, involving a departure from increased transport activity to better integrated transport systems, and a move towards managing energy efficiency as opposed to focusing on increased supply.

For industry, the Commission is proposing increased assistance to SMEs so as to enable these companies to use clean technologies and thus to become full partners in industry's share of the responsibility for moving towards sustainable development. At the same time, the Commission is seeking to raise the awareness of industry as to what the integration of environment into company strategies would bring in terms of cost efficiency and competitiveness.

Increasingly, therefore, environmental aspects will be incorporated in policy and instruments in other areas. Legislation adopted by the EU Environment Ministers will be only part of the picture as far as the achievements of Union environment policy is concerned. Of equal importance will be what happens in other fora, whether this be the Transport, Energy or Agriculture Councils, to take but a few examples of many.

While legislation will still be a central instrument of Union environment policy, the Commission believes that other policy instruments will need increasingly to come to the fore if current progress towards sustainable development is to be reinforced and current unsustainable trends addressed between now and the end of the decade. Frameworks are planned for the use of voluntary agreements and the application of 'green' levies and charges. The Commission firmly believes that economic and fiscal instruments represent a particularly efficient approach.

The Commission also proposes to encourage fiscal reform, which means switching the tax burden from labour to the use and pollution of environmental resources. At the same time, improved implementation and enforcement of legislation is a fundamental priority which will be addressed in a Commission policy communication.

The Commission's proposed Action Plan also maps out an increasingly key role for the EU at international level. In this respect, it proposes that the EU should take a greater leadership role in assisting others to move towards the path of sustainable development. Priorities

include increased cooperation with the EU's neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe, and in the Mediterranean and Baltic regions. This is on top of the role of the EU in the rapidly moving wider international arena in areas such as climate change, ozone layer protection and biodiversity.

On specific environmental issues, the Action Plan sets out a list of issues to which priority attention needs to be given, in particular: climate change and ozone depletion, acidification and air quality, management of water resources, nature protection, waste, noise and risk management related to installations and chemicals.

However, the Commission recognises that it will not be enough if much of what emerges is rhetoric. It will take a shift in the environmental awareness of the European citizen before enough political momentum is created to make sustainable development an every-day reality as opposed to a vague ideal. The Commission therefore attaches much importance to improving the quality and access of environmental information and communication supplied to the public.

The Commission, in adopting its proposal for an Action Plan on environment and sustainable development has therefore laid down a challenge. It has recognised that it is vital that the Union sends European citizens clear signals that sustainable development is an important strategic objective. Today's actions will dictate the environmental quality and economic sustainability of tomorrow. With a concentrated effort by actors at all levels in all the targeted sectors, the foundations can be in place by the end of this century for sustainable development.

Policy instruments

Implementation and enforcement

Environment issues

Emerges and information



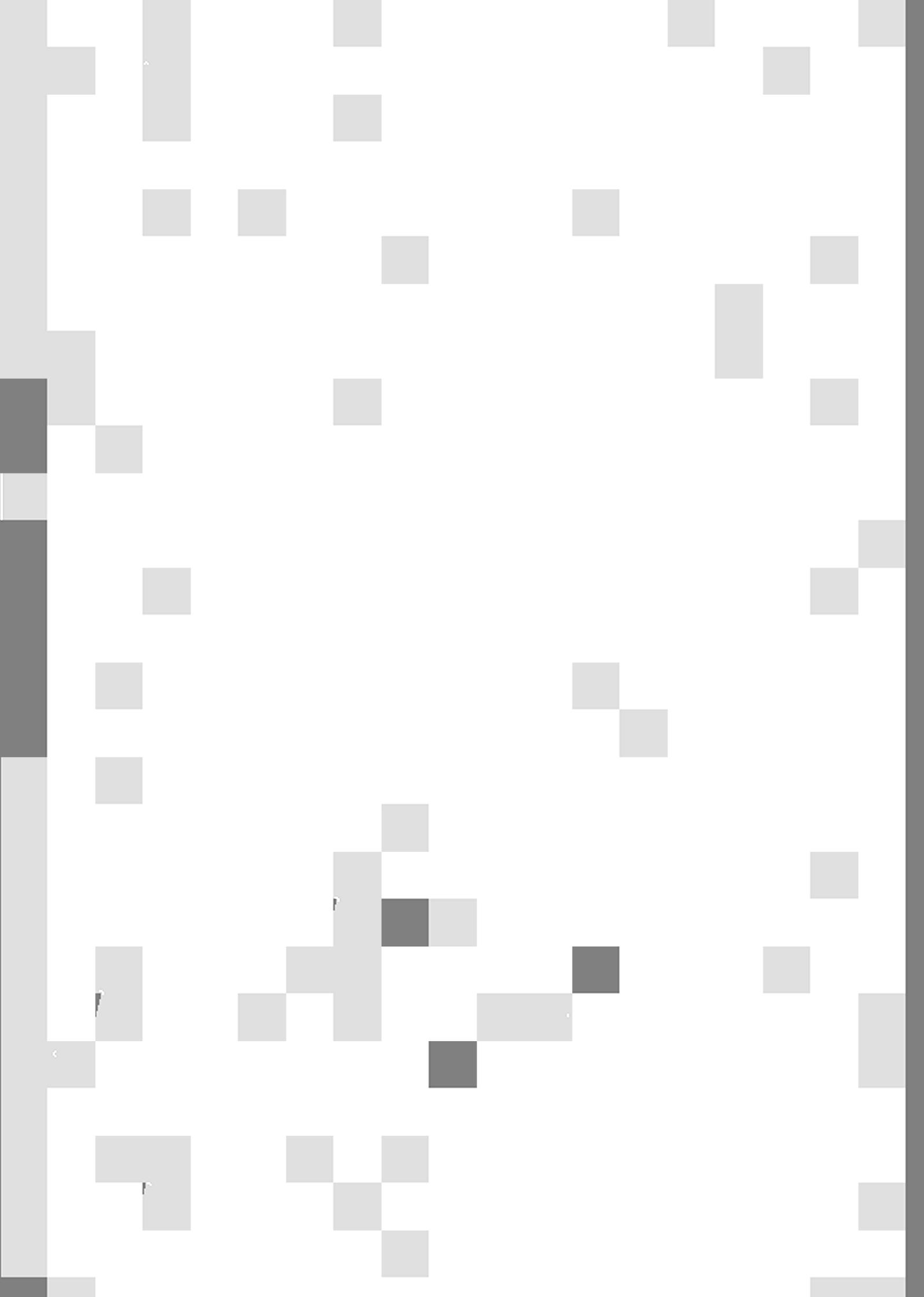
European Commission

Taking European environment policy into the 21st century

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

1996 — 24 pp. — 21 x 29.7 cm

ISBN 92-827-6627-6



BELGIQUE / BELGIË

**Moniteur belge/
Belgisch Staatsblad**
Rue de Louvain 42/Leuvenseweg 42
B-1000 Bruxelles/B-1000 Brussel
Tél. (02) 512 00 26
Fax (02) 511 01 84

Jean De Lannoy
Avenue du Roi 202/Koningslaan 202
B-1060 Bruxelles/B-1060 Brussel
Tél. (02) 538 51 69
Fax (02) 538 08 41

Autres distributeurs/
Overige verkooppunten:

**Librairie européenne/
Europese boekhandel**
Rue de la Loi 244/Wetstraat 244
B-1040 Bruxelles/B-1040 Brussel
Tél. (02) 231 04 35
Fax (02) 735 08 60

Document delivery:

Credoc
Rue de la Montagne 34/Bergstraat 34
Boîte 11/Bus 11
B-1000 Bruxelles/B-1000 Brussel
Tél. (02) 511 69 41
Fax (02) 513 31 95

DANMARK

J. H. Schultz Information A/S
Herstedvang 10-12
DK-2620 Albertslund
Tlf. 43 63 23 00
Fax (Sales) 43 63 19 69
Fax (Management) 43 63 19 49

DEUTSCHLAND

Bundesanzeiger Verlag
Postfach 10 05 34
D-50445 Köln
Tel. (02 21) 20 29-0
Fax (02 21) 2 02 92 78

GREECE/ΕΛΛΑΔΑ

G.C. Eleftheroudakis SA
International Bookstore
Nikis Street 4
GR-10563 Athens
Tel. (01) 322 63 23
Fax 323 98 21

ESPAÑA

Mundi-Prensa Libros, SA
Castelló, 37
E-28001 Madrid
Tel. (91) 431 33 99 (Libros)
431 32 22 (Suscripciones)
435 36 37 (Dirección)
Fax (91) 575 39 98

Boletín Oficial del Estado

Trafalgar, 27-29
E-28071 Madrid
Tel. (91) 538 22 95
Fax (91) 538 23 49

Sucursal:

Librería Internacional AEDOS
Consejo de Ciento, 391
E-08009 Barcelona
Tel. (93) 488 34 92
Fax (93) 487 76 59

**Librería de la Generalitat
de Catalunya**

Rambra dels Estudis, 118 (Palau Moja)
E-08002 Barcelona
Tel. (93) 302 68 35
Tel. (93) 302 64 62
Fax (93) 302 12 99

FRANCE

**Journal officiel
Service des publications
des Communautés européennes**

26, rue Desaix
F-75727 Paris Cedex 15
Tél. (1) 40 58 77 01/31
Fax (1) 40 58 77 00

IRELAND

Government Supplies Agency
4-5 Harcourt Road
Dublin 2
Tel. (1) 66 13 111
Fax (1) 47 52 760

ITALIA

Licosa SpA
Via Duca di Calabria 1/1
Casella postale 552
I-50125 Firenze
Tel. (055) 64 54 15
Fax 64 12 57

GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

Messageries du livre
5, rue Raiffeisen
L-2411 Luxembourg
Tél. 40 10 20
Fax 49 06 61

NEDERLAND

SDU Servicecentrum Uitgeverijen
Postbus 20014
2500 EA 's-Gravenhage
Tel. (070) 37 89 880
Fax (070) 37 89 783

ÖSTERREICH

**Manz'sche Verlags-
und Universitätsbuchhandlung**
Kohlmarkt 16
A-1014 Wien
Tel. (1) 531 610
Fax (1) 531 61-181

Document delivery:

Wirtschaftskammer
Wiedner Hauptstraße
A-1045 Wien
Tel. (0222) 50105-4356
Fax (0222) 50206-297

PORTUGAL

Imprensa Nacional — Casa da Moeda, EP
Rua Marquês Sá da Bandeira, 16-A
P-1099 Lisboa Codex
Tel. (01) 353 03 99
Fax (01) 353 02 94/384 01 32

**Distribuidora de Livros
Bertrand, Ld.ª**

Grupo Bertrand, SA
Rua das Terras dos Vales, 4-A
Apartado 37
P-2700 Amadora Codex
Tel. (01) 49 59 050
Fax 49 60 255

SUOMI/FINLAND

Akateeminen Kirjakauppa
Akademiska Bokhandeln
Pohjoisesplanadi 39 / Norra esplanaden 39
PL / PB 128
FIN-00101 Helsinki / Helsingfors
Tel. (90) 121 4322
Fax (90) 121 44 35

SVERIGE

BTJ AB
Traktorvägen 11
Box 200
S-221 00 Lund
Tel. (046) 18 00 00
Fax (046) 18 01 25

UNITED KINGDOM

HMSO Books (Agency section)
HMSO Publications Centre
51 Nine Elms Lane
London SW8 5DR
Tel. (0171) 873 9090
Fax (0171) 873 8463

ICELAND

**BOKABUD
LARUSAR BLÖNDAL**
Skólavörðustíg, 2
IS-101 Reykjavík
Tel. 551 56 50
Fax 552 55 60

NORGE

NIC Info a/s
Boks 6512 Etterstad
0606 Oslo
Tel. (22) 57 33 34
Fax (22) 68 19 01

SCHWEIZ/SUISSE/SVIZZERA

OSEC
Stampfenbachstraße 85
CH-8035 Zürich
Tel. (01) 365 54 49
Fax (01) 365 54 11

BÄLGARIJA

Europress Klassica BK Ltd
66, bd Vitosha
BG-1463 Sofia
Tel./Fax (2) 52 74 75

ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA

NIS ČR
Havelkova 22
CZ-130 00 Praha 3
Tel./Fax (2) 24 22 94 33

HRVATSKA

Mediatrade
P. Hatza 1
HR-4100 Zagreb
Tel./Fax (041) 43 03 92

MAGYARORSZÁG

Euro-Info-Service
Európá Ház
Margitsziget
H-1138 Budapest
Tel./Fax (1) 111 60 61, (1) 111 62 16

POLSKA

Business Foundation
ul. Krucza 38/42
PL-00-512 Warszawa
Tel. (2) 621 99 93, 628 28 82
International Fax&Phone (0-39) 12 00 77

ROMÂNIA

Euromedia
65, Strada Dionisie Lupu
RO-70184 Bucuresti
Tel./Fax 1-31 29 646

RUSSIA

CCEC
9,60-Ietiya Oktyabrya Avenue
117312 Moscow
Tel./Fax (095) 135 52 27

SLOVAKIA

**Slovak Technical
Library**
Nám. slobody 19
SLO-812 23 Bratislava 1
Tel. (7) 52 204 52
Fax (7) 52 957 85

CYPRUS

**Cyprus Chamber of Commerce
and Industry**
Chamber Building
38 Grivas Dhigenis Ave
3 Deligiorgis Street
PO Box 1455
Nicosia
Tel. (2) 44 95 00, 46 23 12
Fax (2) 36 10 44

MALTA

Miller Distributors Ltd
PO Box 25
Malta International Airport LQA 05 Malta
Tel. 66 44 88
Fax 67 67 99

TÜRKIYE

Pres AS
Dünya Infotel
TR-80050 Tünel-Istanbul
Tel. (1) 251 91 90/251 96 96
Fax (1) 251 91 97

ISRAEL

Roy International
17, Shimon Hatarssi Street
P.O.B. 13056
61130 Tel Aviv
Tel. (3) 546 14 23
Fax (3) 546 14 42

Sub-agent for the Palestinian Authority:

INDEX Information Services

PO Box 19502
Jerusalem
Tel. (2) 27 16 34
Fax (2) 27 12 19

EGYPT/
MIDDLE EAST

Middle East Observer
41 Sherif St.
Cairo
Tel/Fax (2) 393 97 32

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA/
CANADA

UNIPUB

4611-F Assembly Drive
Lanham, MD 20706-4391
Tel. Toll Free (800) 274 48 88
Fax (301) 459 00 56

CANADA

Subscriptions only
Uniquement abonnements

Renouf Publishing Co. Ltd

1294 Algoma Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1B 3W8
Tel. (613) 741 43 33
Fax (613) 741 54 39

AUSTRALIA

Hunter Publications

58A Gipps Street
Collingwood
Victoria 3066
Tel. (3) 9417 53 61
Fax (3) 9419 71 54

JAPAN

Procurement Services Int. (PSI-Japan)

Kyoku Dome Postal Code 102
Tokyo Kojimachi Post Office
Tel. (03) 32 34 69 21
Fax (03) 32 34 69 15

Sub-agent:

Kinokuniya Company Ltd

Journal Department
PO Box 55 Chitose
Tokyo 156
Tel. (03) 34 39-0124

SOUTH and EAST ASIA

Legal Library Services Ltd

Orchard
PO Box 0523
Singapore 9123
Tel. 243 24 98
Fax 243 24 79

SOUTH AFRICA

Safto

5th Floor, Export House
Cnr Maude & West Streets
Sandton 2146
Tel. (011) 883-3737
Fax (011) 883-6569

ANDERE LÄNDER
OTHER COUNTRIES
AUTRES PAYS

**Office des publications officielles
des Communautés européennes**

2, rue Mercier
L-2985 Luxembourg
Tél. 29 29-1
Télex PUBOF LU 1324 b
Fax 48 85 73, 48 68 17



OFFICE FOR OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

L-2985 Luxembourg

ISBN 92-827-6627-6



9 789282 766279 >