

METAMORPHOSIS

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EDITORIAL

LESSONS FROM THE ELECTIONS

The elections for the European Parliament were a great deception. Most of the EU's citizens decided not to vote. Many who did vote sent representatives who see the EU as a threat. The voters in the new Member States showed even less interest and more opposition than the average.

This outcome is a defeat for the European political leaders who launched the debate for an EU Constitution, to increase the trust and involvement of the EU's citizens.

The EEB and others warned of the failure of the EU Constitution negotiations to excite the public, as the discussions focused on things that only interest professional politicians.

The EEB wanted both the candidates and the electorate to consider the environmental agenda for the next five years. We think that many new MEPs are now aware of that agenda, and of the active interest of the environmental movement in their own countries in what they will do for the environment. But the environment never featured as a priority issue in the debates. There is a public perception that European environmental issues have been dealt with, with just some final, technical adjustments to be made: this is just not the case.

CONSTITUTION DOES NOT EXCITE

Civil society organisations had some impact on the draft Constitution. We managed to keep sustainable development as a core objective and environmental policy integration as a horizontal requirement for all EU policies. We got the Charter of Fundamental Rights integrated into the Constitution, and the concept of 'participatory democracy' was introduced.

But now there is a lively discussion going on over whether the Constitution should be approved or not. If the Constitution is rejected, the existing Treaties will continue to be the legal basis for the EU's actions. So there will be no vacuum, and rejection, on the right grounds, might shake the EU leaders from their narrow agendas that have failed to inspire the public. But it does not guarantee that we will have a better Constitution afterwards.

However the Constitution has not made things worse for the environment. The environment has seen an improvement in the stronger role of the European Parliament in policy-making, which helps to bring about more transparency and public participation, and with the concept of participatory democracy, which means that the EU institutions are obliged to accept the role of civil society.

NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION

This autumn the new European Commission, led by Portuguese ex-Prime Minister Barroso, will develop its strategic objectives for the coming five years. It is very important that it draws the right conclusions from the failed vote of confidence in the June elections. It should realise that the EU should work with a positive vision in which sustainable development plays a central part, combining quality of life, employment, social protection and fairness with improvement of environment and protection of biodiversity. All this can be found in the Constitution.

Deregulation and devolution are no options for environmental policies, as long as the EU is a single market. And we need a clear policy on sustainable development. The EEB will give a push in this direction with its Conference on 20 September: 'A Sustainable Development Strategy for the new Commission' (see www.eeb.org).

The Commission's work should focus on climate change, deterioration of biodiversity, the poisoning of human bodies and the environment: these are major threats to our existence that must be central in the strategic objectives of the new European Commission. ●●●

John Hontelez, EEB Secretary General

EEB AND WWF REJECT BUSINESS IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stefan Scheuer, EEB EU Policy Director

On 14 July, the EEB and the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), members of a European Commission-led working group on terms of reference for Business Impact Assessment, announced they were not able to support this assessment due to the methodology used and the lack of transparency. Both organisations will stay in the working group, which advises two large business organisations (UNICE and CEFIC), so as to be able to follow the process, but this should not be understood as an endorsement.

This Business Impact Assessment is a further review of the possible costs for the chemicals industry and its clients of the draft European law on Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH), published on 29 October 2003. At that time, last-minute concessions were made in the chemical industry's interest, which resulted in a dramatic weakening of protection requirements in REACH for human health and the environment. With its proposal the Commission undertook an impact assessment, showing that the

total costs of REACH will stay below €5.2 billion spread over 11 years, compared to an estimated potential public health benefit of €50 billion over 30 years. Despite this potentially huge net benefit, the Italian EU Presidency, with the chemical industry lobby, which did not accept the Commission's original impact assessment findings, pushed the Commission into undertaking a further business impact assessment.

The EEB and WWF accepted the invitation to participate on several conditions, including the written assurance of the then Environment Commissioner Wallström and Competitiveness Commissioner Liikanen that the Commission 'will ensure a balanced and neutral consideration of all stakeholder interests'.

WWF and EEB contributed constructively to the proceedings of the working group from May 2004. However, they were denied access to key data but were expected to endorse findings drawn from these, and considered that industry interests were favoured over, for example, worker health and benefits for companies producing safer products.

WWF and EEB will remain involved in the impact assessment working group in order to be able to follow the process. However, the key aim of this working group, to achieve a common understanding of the impacts on business from REACH, is unlikely to be achieved if the methodological and transparency issues are not resolved. ■

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EEB ASSESSMENT OF THE IRISH EU PRESIDENCY

Good on intentions, poor on implementation measures

Frank Corcoran, EEB Board Member, and Chair of An Taisce, Ireland

The EEB has judged the Irish Presidency with regard to the EEB's Ten Green Tests, the Irish Presidency's own declared intentions, the quality of consultation, and the involvement of civil society in policy making.

We are satisfied with the co-operation we received from the officials of the Irish Department of the Environment, whose professionalism ensured that at least their Minister had the opportunity to question the EEB on its proposals. We also appreciated the participation of the Taoiseach and the Environment Minister in a conference in Dublin Castle on 'Investing in Sustainable Development', where the Taoiseach was formally presented with the joint manifesto by the EEB, ETUC and the Platform of European Social NGOs. The Environment Council had a meeting with an NGO delegation led by the EEB, and two meetings were held in advance of the informal Environmental Council, which gave the Minister for the Environment an opportunity to seek clarification on EEB proposals.

The Irish Presidency was not strong on involvement with civil society in the council meetings themselves. It will be interesting to

see if the Dutch Presidency can improve upon that situation.

The Irish Presidency has been, rightly, acclaimed for finishing the task of reaching agreement on a new European Constitution. It is unfortunate that the opportunity was not taken to enable the Constitution to allow the EU to use taxation measures in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

While the Presidency received the joint manifesto on Investing in Sustainable Development in a positive spirit, it failed to introduce the ideas into the Spring Summit. In fact, the environmental dimension seems to have fallen out of the Lisbon process at the expense of competitiveness. In addition, the summit failed to tackle environmentally perverse subsidies. Like others, the Irish people voted by referendum in 1998 to make sustainable development the primary objective of the EU and to integrate the environment into all aspects of policy-making. It is unacceptable that this treaty obligation was hijacked by an entirely different agenda.

The Environment Minister did not make any attempt to start discussions in the Council or at Working Group level on the Aarhus pack-

age, on increasing public participation in decision-making, and access to information and justice. This was not surprising, as the Freedom of Information Act in Ireland was recently curtailed and the European Commission has found that charges introduced on public participation in planning in Ireland are illegal.

Some progress was made on recognising the priority of waste prevention measures and the importance of reuse, durability of products, and deposit return schemes. However, the request by the EEB to introduce targets as a way of achieving results was ignored.

On biodiversity, the Presidency's Malahide Conference presented priority objectives and targets for reaching the Gothenburg goal of halting loss of biodiversity by 2010. The Killarney declaration recognised the critical importance of research and improved knowledge in delivering the EU bio-diversity strategy. However, they failed to develop a delivery plan, and institutional arrangements and finances were not clarified. Hopefully, the Dutch Presidency will address these shortcomings. ■

ARE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF DUTCH EU PRESIDENCY REALISTIC?

Ralph Hallo, EEB President, and Stichting Natuur en Milieu, The Netherlands

Is it fair to have high expectations for the Dutch EU Presidency? After all, each of the EU's three main decision-making institutions is in transition.

The EU has just welcomed ten new member states and the Dutch Presidency is the first complete Presidency where the Council of Ministers will have to work with 25 full voting participants. Leading a discussion with 25 participants will be challenging in itself; reaching agreement among so many is likely to be even more difficult.

The newly-elected European Parliament will first need to select its President, committee chairs and determine in which committees each member sits. The normal legislative schedule will only resume after the summer holidays, so the Dutch Presidency will be half-way through its term before the first reports can be considered by Parliament.

The current European Commission has been winding down for some time, generating fewer new proposals in all areas, including

in the environment. The new Commission will take office on 1 November, with just two months remaining of the Dutch Presidency. This means that the Dutch Presidency has a reduced pipeline of ongoing legislative work.

Despite all this, we can look to the Dutch Presidency to make progress on a number of significant new directives and regulations. The first of these is REACH, the EU's attempt to establish a new chemicals policy. The Presidency's leadership skills will be tested in the contentious negotiations on this proposal, which involve ministers of economic affairs as well as environment ministers.

Leadership will also be required to secure ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, the EU's implementation of its commitments and moving the climate negotiations forward.

The EEB welcomes the Dutch Presidency's intention to make work on the proposed Access to Justice Directive a priority, and also on the proposed regulation applying the Aarhus Convention to EU institutions.

Progress here is important in its own right, to make it possible for the EU to be a Party to the Aarhus Convention by the time of the next Meeting of the Parties in May 2005.

The Dutch Presidency intends to use the opportunity offered by the reduced pipeline of legislative proposals, to place 'sustainable mobility' and 'energy for development', among other topics, on the EU policy agenda. It will be interesting to see how these initiatives are continued during future Presidencies.

Perhaps the most significant challenge for the Dutch Presidency will be giving environmental protection a central role in EU policies. The Dutch Presidency can encourage a change in the tone and emphasis of the debate, by working to strengthen the environmental dimension of the Lisbon process and re-invigorating the requirement that environmental protection be integrated in all that the EU does. ■

EEB'S TEN GREEN TESTS FOR THE DUTCH EU PRESIDENCY

①	GREENING THE LISBON PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the EU Sustainable Development Strategy a major driver of the Lisbon Process. • Give the Environment Council a lead role in the Lisbon Process. • Initiate positive investment proposals that combine environmental, social and economic objectives, such as in housing and transport. • Make real progress in phasing out environmentally-damaging subsidies in the EU by implementing the 2003 Spring Summit demand for 'the reform of subsidies that have considerable negative effects on the environment and that are incompatible with sustainable development'.
②	A EUROPEAN COMMISSION WITH A CLEAR MANDATE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require from the new President of the Commission a concrete commitment to sustainable development and environmental policy integration (article 6). • Reject the establishment of a 'super commissioner' on economy/competitiveness.
③	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVES 2007-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All relevant expenditure should promote sustainable development and Article 6. • Cohesion policy environmental requirements should be strengthened, not weakened. • Research and competitiveness promotion should have sustainable development and environmental performance as specific objectives.
④	A STRONG EU CHEMICALS POLICY WITHOUT FURTHER DELAYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek a breakthrough on key problems of REACH, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acceptance of registration requirements based on hazard and tonnage • improvement of criteria and selection of "very high concern" chemicals • replacement of 'adequate control' with a solid substitution system • quality assurance of industry information, with at least 5% of registration dossiers to be evaluated by national authorities • same standard for chemicals in imported articles • improved transparency and access to information.
⑤	CLIMATE CHANGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the European Climate Change programme and the work on policies and measures. • Ensure that the National Action Plans produce strong emission cuts in the EU, consistent with the overall Kyoto target. • Strictly limit the number of Emission Trading credits that can come from Joint Implementation and the Clean Development Mechanism. Apply this cap at an entity level. Disallow credits from sinks, large hydro plants or nuclear projects under any circumstances. • Continue efforts to secure ratification by Russia of the Kyoto Protocol. • Work with developing countries on adaptation and a framework for a post-Kyoto regime. • Support investment in renewables.
⑥	RURAL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that pillar 2 is strengthened substantially via increased modulation and is budgeted for in the new Financial Perspectives. Rural development should become the core of the CAP. • Insist that agri-environmental measures remain compulsory in all EU Member States, are available across the EU territory and promoted by favourable co-financing rates. • Integrate environmental criteria across all Rural Development measures.
⑦	SUPPORT THE AARHUS CONVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the EU will be a Party to the Convention by May 2005; in particular, finalise the first reading of the Directive on Access to Justice and the Regulation on application of the Aarhus Convention by the EU institutions in line with the EP positions. • Support the inclusion of public participation in GMO-related decisions as a legally binding requirement in the Convention.
⑧	BATTERIES: TOWARDS A CADMIUM BAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Parliament's first reading and ensure a directive on Batteries and Accumulators that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implements proper hazardous waste prevention and introduces a phase-out (ban) of use and marketing of batteries and accumulators containing more than 20 ppm of Cadmium with only those exemptions strictly necessary • establishes full individual producer responsibility, with obligatory deposit systems to address hoarding and a collection system for all batteries and accumulators with collection targets set in terms of consumption rather than volume collectable (to be specifically achieved by NiCd batteries too).
⑨	GROUNDWATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to amend extensively the draft Directive on Groundwater in order to ensure that the high level of protection under the 1980 Groundwater Directive is maintained and improved. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the protection of pristine groundwater from quality deterioration • the prevention of input of hazardous substances • the limitation of input of all other pollutants based on the Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements in order to achieve the WFD's surface water and ecosystem objectives and to progressively reduce the level of purification treatment needed to produce drinking water.
⑩	SET THE RIGHT EXAMPLE: ELIMINATE THE IMPLEMENTATION BACKLOG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate the Dutch backlog on implementing EU environmental legislation by the end of the Presidency. • Meet any new deadlines for implementation falling during the Presidency.

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORM 2003

Christine Falter, EEB Agriculture and Biodiversity officer, and Valentina Bastino, EEB stagiaire

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), agreed on 26 June 2004, represents a far-reaching reform of the CAP. Member States have been granted substantial flexibility in how they implement the reform, and can make a real difference for nature and the environment by selecting appropriate measures.

The main new ideas of the MTR include decoupling of subsidies from production volume, introduced as a general principle with the new Single Farm Payment, and the national envelope.

Member States can opt for partial decoupling, keeping a limited link between payments and production in certain sectors of particular concern, e.g. to avoid abandonment of land. Moreover payments can be based on a historic model (payments based on historic yields of the reference period 2000-2001) or on regional implementation (all farmers in a certain region receive the same payment per hectare).

The national envelope, an option granted by Article 69, consists of additional payments (up to 10% of total direct payments) for specific types of farming which are important for the protection and enhancement of the environment or for improving the quality and marketing of agricultural products. Environmental NGOs welcome this measure but not many countries so far have expressed their interest in it.

By August 2004 Member States have to devise their national implementation plan and submit it to the European Commission for approval.

Implementation plans

While some countries opt for total decoupling and regionalised payments after a transition period, other countries aim to decouple as little as possible. There are general trends in the implementation plans according to the geographic area.

The Mediterranean countries share a concern for their poorer regions and the risk of land abandonment. Their plans, as discussed so far, involve a historic approach to payment distribution and partial coupling is retained in certain sectors. While the Italy and Portugal will implement the Single Farm Payment from 2005, Spain will probably delay it to 2006 and Greece to 2007. Greece will retain partial coupling for part of the livestock sector. Portugal, Spain and Italy are keen on support for durum

wheat. However, Italy is particularly concerned about special livestock breeds and seeds.

Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria and Belgium appear to favour full decoupling and a historic approach, although the Netherlands and Belgium would retain some coupling, the Netherlands for beef and calf slaughter premia, flax and starch potatoes, Belgium for suckler cows and slaughter premium (Flanders only). The Wallonie region of Belgium, moreover, would adopt a hybrid model of payments allocation. They would initiate the reform in 2005 and no use of the national envelope is envisaged.

France is mainly concerned with the economic security of its farmers and the maintenance of productivity on all its territory. It would opt for partial decoupling and a historical approach, with the plan starting in 2006.

Germany and the UK are interesting examples of implementation plans. Germany is planning to adopt a dynamic hybrid system of distribution: the plan would initiate in 2005 with historic payments, these would start to be gradually substituted by a percentage of area payment in 2010, until reaching the full area payment by 2013. The main objective in Germany would be a redistribution of money between farmers and between regions.

The UK has also submitted interesting proposals. Both Scotland and Wales will start implementation from 2005 with full decoupling and a historic approach, while Northern Ireland and England will fully decouple and adopt a hybrid model. England will move from historic payments to area payments in a transition period between 2005 and 2012, with England being divided in three regions receiving different amounts of funding. Northern Ireland, on the other hand, will adopt a static hybrid model from 2005, with payments based partly on historic yields and partly on area.

As far as the nordic countries are concerned, Denmark is in favour of full decoupling (however excluding parts of the livestock sector), Sweden would fully decouple the arable sector, while Finland would retain some coupling, although this would be gradually phased out. These three countries would use a hybrid approach to payment distribution.

National envelope

Member States which choose to use the national envelope, under article 69, have to define what type of farming will be covered by the measure

and prove that the payment will be compatible with existing measures under rural development (Article 69 must not be the same as rural development measures).

Sweden is planning to make marginal use of the national envelope: 0.5% of direct payments will be used for quality production and marketing. This would not exclude the possibility of using the full national envelope option (10%) by 2007 if permitted by the Commission.

Italy is discussing the possibility of using article 69 to support durum wheat and suckler cows, while Scotland and Finland are planning to use the national envelope to support the beef sector.

Danish NGOs are lobbying hard for the use of article 69 for organic farming, setting aside land on all farms (15%) for nature as well as pasturing (beef sector only) and decreasing of the use of pesticides. Denmark may be interested in gradually augmenting the national envelope.

New Member States

As far as the new Member States are concerned, the components of the 1st pillar (direct payments, price support instruments and supply management instruments) will be introduced in the following way:

The NMS will receive only 25% of the EU level of direct payments in the first year and these will be increased gradually over a 10-year period to reach the full 100% in 2013. The NMS can either apply the standard system of direct payment as in the EU-15 or use a simplified, single area payment system (SAPS) in the first five years. All NMS except Slovenia and Malta have decided for SAPS, under which a flat amount of money will be paid per hectare of farmland in the whole country.

This system will allow NMS to safely use up all the available EU funds for direct payments and then to easily switch to the reformed EU system of single farm payments in 2009.

In addition, the NMS have negotiated the possibility to add up to 30% more direct payments on top of the EU ones. These top-ups can be funded from national budgets and/or, in the first three years by shifting up to 20% of Rural Development funds to direct payments.

THE LISBON PROCESS: RISK OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

The political leaders of the European Union seem to be occupied at the moment with three main concerns: terrorism, migration and economic growth. The economic growth agenda has been highlighted in particular in the so-called Lisbon Process. In March 2000, the European Council decided to strive to make the EU '*become {by 2010} the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*'. It was to try to achieve this objective using a new way of working, the 'open method of coordination'.

John Hontelez: Mr Moldan, what is the main task of the Kok Group?

Bedrich Moldan: Prodi, the President of the Commission, said in the opening session that the group should interpret its mandate in a broad manner. The group is to look at bottlenecks for economic progress in the EU, in the institutions, in the market, and take into account global competition. It is expected to come up with some clear suggestions for the way forward.

JH: What do you expect to be the key debate?

Moldan: The focus so far has been on a major dilemma that the EU faces. On the one hand, it wants to be the most competitive economy in the world, but on the other, the European public is not willing to give up its existing social security systems. This might turn out to be incompatible, as the current system makes labour expensive and less productive than in other parts of the world.

JH: What role is there for environmental protection in the discussion?

Moldan: So far, the environment has not come up during discussions. It is a good thing that environmental regulation and policies have not

This means that the Commission would facilitate but not direct the process, and Member States would stimulate each other by measuring national progress against certain indicators and benchmarks. Every year in the spring, the European Council would assess progress and agree on new activities. Since 2001, with the launch of a Sustainable Development Strategy, the environmental dimension has been included in the Lisbon Process, at least in theory.

In March 2004, the European Council came to the conclusion that the Lisbon Process risked not delivering its promised objectives.

been identified immediately as major barriers for competitiveness and growth. But it is not good enough. The group, in my view, should present a vision on what kind of economy the Lisbon Process should deliver. There is talk about the European model. But this is not clearly defined. It is often equated to the European Social Model. I disagree with that. We need to have a broader and more innovative perspective, and it should clearly include environmentally sustainable development. I add the adjective 'environmentally' on purpose, as the phrase 'sustainable development' is so much abused these days, that we have to emphasise again that environmental performance is an essential precondition for a healthy economy and society in the longer term.

We should build upon the strong support of the public for environmental policies. We should, on the one hand, show how important environmental protection is to maintain the life-supporting elements of the planet and public health, and on the other, how environmental policies can actually trigger innovation, new activities and jobs. The informal Environmental Council organised by the Dutch Presidency for mid-July, focuses on the environment as an opportunity and is a good initiative for this.

Consequently, it decided to conduct an in-depth review of the process, led by the European Commission, and it also asked former Dutch Prime Minister *Wim Kok* to chair a high-level group to carry out an independent review. This group has 13 members and started work in May 2004. It consists of people with past experience in trade unions, heads of major companies and academics. There is one member with a clear environmental profile, *Bedrich Moldan*, former Minister for the Environment of the Czech Republic. *Metamorphosis* interviewed him about his expectations for the work of the Kok Group.

JH: There is discussion about whether the Sustainable Development Strategy should not become more fully part of the Lisbon Process. What is your opinion?

Moldan: It is important that the Sustainable Development Strategy influences the choices made in the Lisbon Process. We need to stimulate the economy in ways that contribute to environmental sustainability. However, I think the best way to do this is for the Strategy to keep its own profile and process. The risk of integrating the Strategy is that it gets marginalised.

JH: Will the group also discuss the effectiveness of the Method of Open Coordination?

Moldan: It has to. This method is interesting and has potential but it should go beyond just highlighting trends in individual countries. It should lead to analysis on why things occur differently in different countries and find some remedies.

JH: Has the group already discussed the report 'Building a Political Europe' by Dominique Strauss-Kahn?

Moldan: We have not been made aware of this report yet.

A SUSTAINABLE PROJECT FOR TOMORROW'S EUROPE

In its Sustainable Development Strategy of May 2001, the European Commission announced it would 'establish a sustainable development "Roundtable" of about 10 independent experts offering a broad range of views, who will report directly to the Commission President in time for the preparation of the Commission's synthe-

sis report to the Spring European Council and make recommendations to improve the coherence of Community policies.' In January 2003, such a Roundtable started working, led by former French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The group included scientists, politicians, and people with a business back-

ground. The Member with the strongest environmental background was Magda Aelvoet, former Belgian Environment Minister.

In April this year, the chair delivered a final report to President Prodi, called 'Building a Political Europe, 50 proposals for tomorrow's Europe'.

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(http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/pol-icy_advisers/experts_groups/gsk_docs/rap- port_europe_strauss_kahn_en.pdf, also available in French).

The report is not explicitly endorsed by the members of the group, but that does not mean it is uninteresting. It is remarkable that Prodi did not present it to the Kok Group, which may be a sign that the Commission wants to minimize its importance.

The Strauss-Kahn report is worth reading. It tries to give a definition of 'the European Model of Society', one that integrates four essential dimensions:

1. the inviolability of human rights.
2. culture as a means of emancipation.
3. a model of sustainable development, with its own specific balance between economic prosperity, social justice and environmental protection.
4. a vision of the international order based on multilateralism.

Strauss-Kahn continues by describing the threats to this model. For example, he warns against '*fiscal and social dumping*' as a response to globalisation. He also addresses the environmental challenge very strongly: '*We are in an ecological "funnel": the environmental situation is worsening continuously, the effectiveness of environmental*

policies is diminishing, we are reaching the point of no return'.

He pleads for '*building a political Europe*', based on a European model of justice (also for promotion at international level) of economic, environmental and social opportunities and on 'budgetary federalism'. He defines the '*Europe of environmental opportunities*' as follows: '*To be sustainable, the European model must incorporate an environmental prevention principle in three dimensions: stop contributing to the concentration in the environment of materials extracted from the subsoil; stop accumulating in the environment compounds resulting from human production; fight against the systematic physical degradation of ecosystems. These principles will be implemented through an environmental convergence programme. It will be managed by a sustainable development Council equipped with the necessary financial (an environmental convergence fund) and legal (penalties, framework laws) instruments.*'

Strauss-Kahn then specifies this environmental vision with five concrete proposals for the European Union:

- integrate an environmental prevention principle into the European model.
- draw up a 'European programme for environmental convergence'. This overall action programme would be based on an innovative model of strategic preventive planning.

- set up a 'Sustainable Development' Council, with the task of implementing the environmental convergence programme on the basis of a defined timetable and instruments.
- create an environmental convergence fund, within the framework of the Structural Funds, to part-finance the regional and local investments needed to bring plant and equipment into line with environmental standards.
- by means of a European framework law, introduce environmental criteria into the public procurement contracts of the Union and the Member States.

The new European Commission should certainly discuss the recommendations of Strauss-Kahn, and the Kok Group should include it in its work as well.

John Hontelez,
EEB Secretary General

A NEW SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE EU

John Hontelez, EEB Secretary General

The outgoing European Commission presented a Sustainable Development Strategy in May 2001. This Strategy contains important notions and proposals. It emphasises the urgency and political leadership required. It advocates the use of financial instruments to make the market work for the environment, as well as the abolition of environmentally perverse subsidies. And it sets specific objectives for four important policy areas (climate change, mobility, nature and natural resources, and public health). In this way it created expectations, which have only partly been fulfilled.

This autumn, a first assessment of its implementation and results will take place. This should lead to a commitment from the new Commission to the Strategy, amended or not, complemented with concrete actions in its five-year work programme.

The outgoing Commission has begun a public consultation in ending in October. The Annual Conference of the EEB, 'A new sustainable development strategy for the EU', 20 September 2004, is likely to be the only occasion for discussing the successes, failures and lessons of the Strategy directly with EU politi-

cians and officials in that period. The conference conclusions could become an important contribution to the new Commission's dedication to sustainable development.

The EEB is worried about attempts to sideline the environmental agenda and make it subordinate to narrowly defined 'competitiveness proofing'. We see some industries, for example, chemical producers, riding this wave by fiercely fighting one of the most important pieces of draft legislation the outgoing Commission produced, REACH (which aims to phase out the production and use of hazardous chemicals). We are convinced that protection and improvement of the environment are a precondition for a sound economy, and in fact for peace, in the longer term.

Making a success of the Sustainable Development Strategy means strong leadership from the European Commission. And it needs determination to make the Lisbon Process, which aims to make the EU the most competitive economy in the world, a tool for the more inclusive and longer-term goal of creating an EU where environmental protection, social objectives and economic activities go truly together.

In other words, the Lisbon Process should be directed in such a way that it becomes a concrete contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

The EEB has a history of promoting sustainable development as central part of EU policies. With environmental allies it successfully lobbied for sustainable development to become part of the Treaty of the European Community (and more recently into the new Constitution). With the European Trade Unions Confederation, the Platform of European Social NGOs and others it presented ideas to make sustainable development work, recently in their joint campaign 'Investing for a Sustainable Future'. It has consistently campaigned for the integration of environmental objectives in sectoral policies and for making a market for the environment.

We hope that the EEB conference will inspire both civil society organisations and EU decision-makers to make the next period of five years of EU policy a giant step in the right direction.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR SPAIN'S NEW GOVERNMENT AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The EEB interviewed Theo Oberhuber, General Coordinator of Ecologistas en Acción, one of the largest Spanish environmental organisations and a member organisation of the EEB. We talked to him about Spain's new government, of its immediate environmental decisions, and the challenges it will face in the coming years.

The new government made international news soon after its acquisition of power, not only by withdrawing its troops from Iraq, but also by confirming a strong commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and suspending the highly controversial Spanish National Hydrological Plan.

John Hontelez: How do you estimate the commitment of the new Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, towards the environment?

Theo Oberhuber: Before and after he was elected as Prime Minister he showed interest and concern for environmental issues like the Kyoto Protocol. And he was always strongly opposed to the National Hydrological Plan (NHP), which includes the Ebro River water transfer to the southern and eastern regions. After becoming Prime Minister he suspended the plan. At the same time he announced an alternative plan.

In addition, he wrote an article in *Meda*, an environmental magazine, where he stated that 'climate change, biodiversity, energy, water and land management and social participation' will be the main priorities of his environmental policy. This article was published one month after his appointment as Prime Minister.

In a meeting he had with the five main ecological organisations, two weeks before the elections, he showed support for several of the demands that we had laid down in our 'Programa por la Tierra'

JH: Regarding the alternative plan to the NHP, does it foresee supplying the same amount of water as did the previous plan?

TH: Unfortunately, like the old one, this new plan continues to encourage water consumption. It is to make additional amounts of water available at a low price. We think that this is a negative message. Instead of supplying additional water, people should learn to save the water they already have.

With the new plan the government aims to supply 1000 hm³ per year. About 50% of this water will come through water reuse, better management and distribution. Another

50% will be made available by seawater desalination (from the Mediterranean). Although desalination can be accepted in a few exceptional cases, like in island populations, we are very critical of this method. It promotes unsustainable agriculture, tourism and urban population growth. Overall, we think this alternative plan is better than the old one, but still not good enough. It doesn't put an end to uncontrolled water demand.

JH: Increase in energy demand is also a problem. It has led to CO₂ emissions above the assigned quota for Spain's CO₂ under the burden-sharing agreement of the EU related to the Kyoto Protocol. What sort of action do you expect from the new government regarding energy?

TH: The new government is having big difficulties with the Kyoto Protocol. Spain is behind schedule on the elaboration of its National Allocation Plan (NAP) agreed under the EU-wide greenhouse gas allowance trading scheme for all Member States. Energy consumption in Spain is very high and keeps growing every year. The government will soon have to deal with the main energy-producing sectors, especially the electricity companies. One of these, ENDESA, claims that Kyoto should be revised, while being opposed to any kind of reduction in CO₂ emissions.

After stopping the NHP, Kyoto will be the second biggest challenge for Zapatero's government. The NAP is currently being drafted and we have stressed that, under this plan, CO₂ emissions should be limited to an increase of less than 15% of 1990 levels. However, we fear that this will not be the case due to mounting pressure from different economic sectors lobbying for more flexibility towards the implementation of the NAP. For many of these sectors, 'flexibility' means abolishing the Kyoto Protocol altogether.

But the government is aware that the main problem is not drafting the NAP but taking measures in other areas like transport. Reduction measures will also have to be included in the new transport policy but the government either doesn't know how or doesn't have the means to achieve this. We would like to see from now on a 20% reduction in energy consumption by 2010 with a corresponding increase in the share of renewable energy used in primary energy production. But the government states that it will be very difficult to achieve these proposed targets.

JH: Did you already know the new environmental minister Cristina Narbona?

TH: Yes, she has many years of experience in environmental issues. She was environmental secretary in the last years of the former socialist government, before the Ministry of the Environment was set up. She had chief responsibility for all environmental matters at the Ministry of Public Works. Also, for the last eight years she was responsible for the Secretariat of the Environment within the Socialist Party where she is known as 'the ecologist'. We have known her for quite some time now and her relationship with our organisation is quite easy.

She has a strong personality. She is a skilled politician with the capacity to debate with different sectors. Even though she has considerable support from the new Prime Minister, she is in a delicate position. Environmental issues were part of the political agenda for the first time in the last general elections and again in the European elections. As proof of this, the Conservative party kept using the cancelled NHP and the Kyoto Protocol as part of its campaign to criticise the new Socialist government.

JH: Do you have concerns about the new government?

TH: In its election programme, the Socialist Party did not give a clear position on nuclear and thermal power stations. It seems that it will keep expanding the high-speed train network and road transport, at the expense of conventional train transport, and it has taken no position on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). The same can be said of the agricultural policy. Its very much influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and there are no plans for a proper agricultural model in Spain for the coming years.

It is perhaps possible to say that this government will make few changes on the main environmental issues. Even with climate change, despite the importance given to this and the good intentions shown, concrete facts and changes have so far failed to materialize. Nevertheless, the situation with the previous government was so poor, a minor gesture towards the environment is seen as a big step forward. But overall we don't expect substantial changes in environmental policy.

Furthermore, the fact that Spain is one of the most decentralised states in Europe makes it difficult to implement a single environmental policy. The increasing level of decision-making by autonomous ●●● continued on page 8

regions in Spain has limited the action capacity of the central government.

These regions are ruled by different political parties and the high level of political confrontation has created a situation where every single issue, including environmental ones, has become very politicized.

JH: As you know, there is an ongoing discussion on the financial perspective of the EU. Among the issues discussed is whether countries like Spain should still have access to Structural Funds. Do you think that Spain should continue having access to these funds ?

TH: We think that EU funds in Spain have been used for projects that have had a very negative environmental impact, for example, extensive road construction. We would like to see EU funds conditioned to strict environmental measures.

Translation by Antonio Perez Rendon

STAFF CHANGES AT THE EEB

The EEB's EU Policy Director, **Roberto Ferrigno**, has stepped down, to become the new Campaigns Director of Greenpeace Italy. The EEB office will miss his gentle, cheerful presence in staff meetings, and his extensive understanding of environmental issues. We wish him well!

To replace Roberto, **Stefan Scheuer**, formerly the EEB's chemicals and water policy officer, will take on the management of all EU

policy work, keeping water issues as his particular interest.

In September, a new staff member will arrive. **Mechthild Naschke** will take on the chemicals and industry policy portfolios. We look forward to welcoming her.

Christine Falter has also decided to move on. She gave dedicated and untiring work to agriculture, biodiversity and soil protection, and although the Biodiversity and Agricul-

ture Working Groups will continue to be coordinated by the member groups, they would not have reached the productive and effective state they are now in without Christine's expert hand. We shall miss her.

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