



# Beyond compliance: how regions can help build a sustainable Europe

**A toolkit for integrating the environment into regional development**

**Jenseits der Verpflichtungen : wie die Regionen zur Gestaltung eines nachhaltigen Europas beitragen können**

Ein Toolkit zur Integration der Umwelt in die regionale Entwicklung

**Πέρα από την συμμόρφωση: πώς μπορούν οι περιφέρειες να βοηθήσουν στην οικοδόμηση της Ευρώπης της αειφόρου ανάπτυξης**

Μία δέσμη εργαλείων για την ενσωμάτωση της περιβαλλοντικής διάστασης στην περιφερειακή

**Más allá del cumplimiento: cómo las regiones pueden contribuir a la construcción de una Europa sostenible**

Un conjunto de herramientas para integrar el medio ambiente en el desarrollo regional

**Oltre il rispetto delle norme: come le regioni possono contribuire a creare un'Europa sostenibile**

Un insieme di strumenti per integrare l'ambiente nello sviluppo regionale

**Túl a kötelezettségeken: hogyan segíthetik a régiók egy fenntartható Európa építését**

A környezeti szempontok regionális fejlesztési programokba történő integrálásának eszköztársere

**Robiąc więcej: jak regiony mogą pomóc w budowaniu zrównoważonej Europy**

Narzędzia dla integracji aspektów środowiskowych w rozwój regionalny

## Foreword from the European Commission

Article 6 of the EC Treaty states that "Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities...in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development".

The wide-ranging provisions of Article 6 are implemented through the EU Lisbon and Sustainable Development Strategies which together provide a driving force for a more prosperous and socially cohesive Europe whilst safeguarding precious environmental assets and striving to achieve low carbon status.

For the 2007-13 programming period, sustainable development is reconfirmed as one of the most important principles of the Cohesion Policy. The cross-cutting nature of sustainable development is reflected in Article 17 of the General Provisions Regulation for the Cohesion Policy 1083/2006/EC, which is a specific expression of the integration principle.

In practice, the actions which the Cohesion Policy and the various Funds support, must fully meet environmental requirements and standards as laid down in Community legislation. These actions are also expected to contribute to the achievement of major EC environmental policy objectives.

This GRDP *Toolkit for integrating the environment into regional development* will lend you a helping hand in addressing the challenges of environmental integration in your regions.

Therefore, I warmly welcome this *Toolkit*, and encourage all public bodies across EU Member States to use it when implementing regional development programmes and developing projects.



Georges Kremlis  
Head of Unit  
Environment Directorate General

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# GRDP Charter 'Regions for sustainable change'

## OUR COMMON VISION

As public organisations involved in regional development, we support an integrated approach to regional development programmes, which place environmental issues firmly alongside economic and social concerns.

Mere compliance with environmental policies and regulations is not enough. The environment is an opportunity and an asset, which needs careful management if long-term economic benefit and prosperity are to be secured. Identifying the environment as a driver for regional development can also give regions a more competitive edge, save resources and money, create a positive public image, manage risks and facilitate compliance with policies and funding requirements.

Environment and sustainable development should therefore be integrated into all regional policies and strategies.

## OUR PARTNERSHIP

'Greening Regional Development Programmes' (GRDP) is an EU-wide network set up with the support of the EU Interreg III C programme. The partners represent a variety of public institutions at national, regional and local level and research organisations.

Our aim is to promote more effective regional programmes, which deliver sustainable results for local people. We want to develop a common understanding between regions on how sustainable development can be better integrated into all regional and economic development programmes.

To support all European regions in their efforts for sustainable regional development, we have developed a Toolkit to help organisations give full weight to environmental issues alongside more traditional economic and social objectives in development programmes.

## OUR CHALLENGES

Local, regional, and national authorities often face challenges in balancing environmental needs against economic and social needs.

To ensure sustainable development in regions, we must work to integrate the environment at all levels of policy implementation. This is one of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union and reflected in key policy streams such as the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies.

We must translate the principle of environmental integration into practical reality and regional development programmes can play a decisive role in delivering better outcomes that are environmentally sustainable.

## OUR RESPONSE

The GRDP Charter 'Regions for sustainable change' is a major step forward towards achieving greener regions which can deliver growth and jobs in a sustainable way. By adopting the Charter, we stress the crucial role the environment should play in regional development programmes.

We urge all European public organisations involved in regional development to join us in signing the 'Regions for sustainable change' Charter. We also want European Union institutions to recognise our Charter and to promote environmental integration in all regional development programmes funded by the EU.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

The GRDP Charter commitments are structured around three inter-related key aspects of regional development programmes:

- Programmes: the design, preparation, planning, set-up, structure, management and evaluation of regional development programmes.
- Partnership: the management of programmes in co-operation with a wide range of stakeholders, including networks.
- Projects: the investments, that are funded by regional development programmes and carry out the programme's objectives.

### **By adopting the Charter, We commit to work towards more sustainable regional development programmes.**

We will:

- work towards an environmentally sustainable future by promoting environmental integration in regional development programmes,
- support an environmental vision for regional development programmes, to ensure that environmental objectives stretch across all programme priorities and measures, and are taken into account in all stages of programme development and implementation,
- consider a more sustainable approach to our agricultural and rural development programmes,

- look at adopting integrated urban management for our cities, and accept environmental regeneration as a driver of a sustainable local economy.

We recognise that Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) reinforces regional development planning, and delivers a more sustainable approach to development.

**We commit to work in partnership.**

We will:

- work in partnership to build trust between different interest groups, resolve conflicts and provide a common basis for future sustainable development,
- support partnership working in policy shaping, programme design and project implementation as an essential tool for a successful programme,
- promote the involvement of environmental partners, including environmental authorities, NGOs and others, to create better understanding of environmental integration in practice and better delivery of sustainable development across all aspects of programmes.

We recognise the use of networks to build the capacity of institutions to develop European, national and multi-regional strategies, policies, plans and programmes, as it gives them the opportunity to exchange experience and identify common solutions.

**We commit to support green projects.**

We will:

- work towards integrating environmental aspects into the design, implementation, and monitoring of all projects,
- promote and disseminate widely information about environmentally successful projects to encourage motivation and commitment amongst future applicants and project beneficiaries.

We recognise that green projects save money and can create social and economic opportunities, as well as stimulate innovation. They are more likely to succeed, as they consider environmental risks in their strategy and are more likely to generate a positive image for the region and people involved.

**RECOGNISING AND APPROVING THE ABOVE, WITH MY/OUR SIGNATURE, I/ WE:**

Endorse the GRDP Charter 'Regions for sustainable change'.

Full name/s and function/s in block capitals: .....

Authority or organisation: .....

Type of organisation: .....

Place and date of signing: .....

Signature/s: .....

Stamp of organisation:



To sign the GRDP Charter 'Regions for sustainable change' please use this form or go to [www.grdp.org](http://www.grdp.org) to download the document. Please post or fax a copy of the signed document to:

Corporate Affairs  
 Environment Agency for England and Wales  
 South West Region  
 Manley House, Kestrel Way  
 Exeter EX2 7LQ UK  
 Tel: +44 (0) 1392 35 2488 Fax: +44 (0) 1392 442026



## Extracts from the speech of Danuta Hübner, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy.

“Environment compliance is a necessity, but we shall endeavour to pursue broader objectives and build with the regions a truly sustainable Europe.

The integration of the environment into regional development is ensured in the process of preparing and implementing programmes and projects, through legal requirement and awareness raising.

The integration of the environment into regional development programmes can improve competitive advantage of a region. It can save resources, create a positive public image, help manage risks, and result in easy compliance with policies and funding requirements.

I very much appreciate your idea of devising a toolkit, which will assist local, regional or national authorities in their daily duties, which are often represented by attempts to balance economic, social and environmental concerns.”

*GRDP conference: ‘Beyond compliance: how regions can help build a sustainable Europe’, Logrono, Spain, 18 April 2007.*



# Beyond Compliance:

how regions can help build a sustainable Europe



## A toolkit for integrating the environment into regional development

This set of fact sheets and reports (included on CD) has been produced by the Greening Regional Development Programmes project<sup>1</sup>. They are a toolkit to help public sector bodies throughout Europe give full weight to environmental issues alongside more traditional economic and social objectives in the 2007-2013 round of development programmes supported by the EU.

The fact sheets can also be used for the same purpose with programmes and strategies funded by national and regional support schemes.

Our environment faces serious challenges. But regional authorities with a wide range of competing priorities cannot always give the environment the attention it deserves. They may seek to comply with environmental regulations, but find themselves driven by traditional social and economic priorities when it comes to policy-making.

<sup>1</sup>'Greening Regional Development Programmes' (GRDP) is a European-wide network funded by the INTERREG IIIC that enables the partners to learn from each other about how to develop their regions while minimising the impact on the environment.

<sup>2</sup>Birley, T; McLaren, G; Tamburrini, S and Llanwarne, A. *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development in Regional Regeneration: Review of the ESEP Approach and Guidance for Applicants*. For more information see [www.esep.co.uk](http://www.esep.co.uk)

### Case studies

#### **Eastern Scotland European Partnership Programme, UK**

An example of how to achieve ambitious goals in sustainable development is provided by the Eastern Scotland European Partnership (ESEP). For the 2000-2006 programme ESEP adopted a comprehensive set of criteria based on sustainable development principles as the framework for project design, appraisal and monitoring for all aspects of the programme. By 2006, the programme supported a range of innovation projects in the commercialisation of environmental technology and processes. The emphasis on partnership brought synergies between project objectives in areas as diverse as sustainable woodland management, tourism and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development. The development of social entrepreneurship in deprived areas requiring regeneration helped socially-excluded communities and environmental renewal<sup>2</sup>.

## Case studies

**Güssing - European center for renewable energy, Austria**

Over the last 14 years, Güssing was one of the poorest regions in Austria with a high unemployment rate, no industry and no rail connection. The regional authority took advantage of Objective 1 funding to turn the area into Europe's leading centre for renewable energy. Güssing has boosted its economy by becoming an energy self-sufficient region through investing in a network of generation plants (e.g. biomass and biogas and photovoltaic systems). The benefits include more than 1000 new created jobs, more than 50 new businesses (trade and industry) and a net income of nine million Euro a year. The city of Güssing is also enjoying the development of "eco-energy tourism", which gave a boost to the tourism development in the region. And now the city is aiming at becoming the first Austrian Centre for further education in the field of renewable energy.<sup>3</sup>

**Environment Park, Piemonte Region, Italy**

The Environment Park is a Science and Technology Park (STP) that combines environment and business and is part of a project involving four other STPs in the Piemonte Region. The project is

a cluster in which small and medium-sized enterprises, research bodies and start-up companies can share services, join in new initiatives and develop new projects. The project has been made possible through close co-operation between all the local authorities and business associations.

Benefits of the Environment Park include:

- large-scale remediation of an industrial area in the centre of Turin;
- 20 new businesses started in the Park since 1999;
- eight foreign companies located in the Park;
- about 500 people working in the Park, of whom 80% are graduates;
- about 150 new jobs created since 1999.

Environment Park's facilities were planned according to the principles of 'green architecture' and made intensive use of innovative technologies, particularly in energy and water management. Environment Park is an innovation among European STPs thanks to its ability to combine technological innovation and eco-efficiency, hosting several companies and research institutes operating in both environmental protection and information and communication technology<sup>4</sup>.

## Why does my programme need an integrated approach?

- The EU General Regulation on Structural Funds<sup>5</sup> now requires environmental sustainability. In line with the revised Lisbon<sup>6</sup> and Gothenburg<sup>7</sup> Agendas, the new Community Strategic Guidelines stress the importance of sustainable development in creating growth and jobs.
- The rising cost of resources and energy will hit hardest on regions that do not integrate environmental issues in their development programmes .
- Winning the hearts and minds of all stakeholders in your region is crucial in making your programme sustainable. Developing its social and environmental aspects with partners who know how to tackle these issues helps ensure this. Integrated programmes also have a resilience that can attract more funding.

**EU General Regulation 1083/2006 on Structural Funds** makes environmental sustainability a key feature of regional funding.

Article 3 states that socio-economic objectives will be strengthened *'by protecting and improving the quality of the environment.'*

Article 17 makes clear that *'The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in the framework of sustainable development and the Community promotion of the goal of protecting and improving the environment.'*

- Being recognised as a 'champion' of sustainable development can attract Europe-wide interest in your programmes. It can also create more business opportunities, especially in an increasingly 'eco-aware' marketplace.

<sup>3</sup>For more information see <http://www.eee-info.net>

<sup>4</sup>For more information see [www.envipark.com](http://www.envipark.com)

<sup>5</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713_en.htm)

<sup>6</sup>For more information see

[http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index\\_en.htm#news](http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm#news)

<sup>7</sup>For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/index.htm>



## So what does environmental integration mean?

Environmental integration means treating the environment as an equal component alongside social and economic issues at every stage of developing the new programme. Natural resources that we take for granted too often are not given the weight they deserve in the policy-making equation.

You already plan for long-term economic sustainability - allowing for inflation, promoting growth and investment and respecting the balance of payments. An integrated approach takes our environment into account in the same way. It does not see the environment as a constraint but rather as an opportunity for innovative economic and social development.

This means that paying lip service to environmental regulation is not enough. There needs to be genuine engagement with environmental concerns in the planning, implementation and evaluation of your programmes.

Environmental integration requires both a **'horizontal'** and **'vertical'** approach:

- **'Horizontal' integration** (also known as a 'cross-cutting theme') aims for environmental sustainability in programmes that have primarily socio-economic objectives. For example, a new rural development scheme may seek better economic outcomes for local farmers but aims to achieve them by encouraging agricultural practices that are environmentally sustainable.
- **'Vertical' integration** has environmental concerns as the prime objective of one part of the programme, even though there may be socio-economic effects. For example, a waste management plant built to improve the environment may lead to the development of a variety of other industries in the sustainable development sector.

A consistent model of environmental integration applies to every stage of a programme:

- In **programme development**, a programme's ex-ante evaluation includes an environmental component, the environment is reflected in its objectives and priorities and the partnership structure includes environmental bodies.

- In **implementation**, environmentally-sustainable methods are integrated into the delivery of wider socio-economic objectives.
- In **monitoring and evaluation**, environmental indicators are linked to social or economic outcomes. Environmental professionals play an integral role in the monitoring and evaluating process.

### How this might look in a typical programme.

In this example, we imagine a programme that aims to help small to medium businesses develop more environmentally-sustainable practices.

**Programme development:** in partnership with environmental bodies, the Managing Authority develops environmental as well as socio-economic objectives. One example would be requiring recipients of funding to meet targets for energy and resource efficiency, land use or green procurement. A partnership with other bodies would be set up to develop this part of the programme.

**Implementation:** again in partnership with environmental bodies, the Managing Authority would assess projects in the light of the environmental criteria it has set. There would be on-going monitoring when projects were under way. For example, a local construction business would have to demonstrate its commitment to waste reduction and recycling, as well as to tackling noise and air pollution.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** alongside the Managing Authority, environmental bodies would be involved in monitoring and assessing the environmental impacts of individual projects and the overall programme.

## The GRDP Toolkit: helping you achieve a green and prosperous future

Organisations like your own are the key to achieving environmental integration in your region - but can you meet the challenge? The GRDP toolkit can help you. Promoting environmental integration offers a great opportunity to assess the readiness of your own organisation and work out what it must do to help achieve an environmentally-sustainable future.

The different parts of our toolkit tackle the basic issues that confront any local or regional authority faced with the challenges of environmental integration.

<p><b>How can the environment benefit economic competitiveness?</b></p>	<p>Many creative projects across Europe use the environment to drive economic innovation. Read more in our fact sheet on <i>Environment as an economic driver</i>.</p>
<p><b>We want our policies to incorporate environmental sustainability. Where can we go for help?</b></p>	<p>Environmental agencies and organisations in your region can provide the help you need. Our fact sheet on <i>Partnership as a tool for sustainability</i> describes how you can involve them in the programme process, as well other interested partners who can help make your policies and processes truly representative.</p>
<p><b>We think we're doing some good work, but it would help to compare our practice with others. Many of the problems we're facing must affect other regions. What are other authorities doing?</b></p>	<p>Our fact sheet on <i>Creating networks to promote environmental integration</i> gives tips on how to set up - or be involved in - networks with other managing and environmental authorities in your own country and across Europe. This is an important way of working together to find common solutions.</p>
<p><b>We know we have to do Strategic Environmental Assessment, but how can we use it to develop programmes of genuine quality?</b></p>	<p>Strategic environmental assessment can be used as the springboard for broader environmental integration in programming. See our fact sheet on <i>Strategic environmental assessment</i>.</p>
<p><b>How - in practice - can we create the conditions which will result in more sustainable investments, i.e. greener projects?</b></p>	<p>Our fact sheet on <i>Greening projects for growth and jobs</i> suggests actions that regional development programme managers can take to foster the development of greener programmes and projects. It also provides examples of the results achieved around Europe.</p>
<p><b>How can we use European funding to achieve a greener agricultural sector?</b></p>	<p>Our fact sheet on <i>Greening agriculture and rural development programmes</i> summarises how national and regional authorities can adopt a more sustainable approach to their rural development programmes. It also looks ahead to further discussions on the Common Agricultural Policy reform, due in 2008.</p>
<p><b>What about cities in our region?</b></p>	<p>Cities may be the source of many of environmental problems but often they also provide the catalyst for environmental innovation. Have a look at our fact sheet on <i>Developing sustainable communities</i>.</p>

# Environment as an economic driver



## What do we mean by the environment as an economic driver?

The environment is a highly valuable capital asset that needs careful management if long-term economic benefit and prosperity are to be secured.

In the past the view has been that the economy and environment are at odds and that economic growth inevitably damages the environment while protecting the environment damages economic growth. However, there is a new understanding emerging that the environment can, and does, bring real economic benefits, offer novel opportunities and stimulate the economy to grow in new ways. This fact sheet explains how these benefits and opportunities can be exploited in regional development programmes.

### Case studies

#### **The Regional Economic Strategy for South West England 2006-2015, UK**

The South West of England's rich and diverse environment is one of the region's greatest assets. The environment has therefore been identified in the South West of England Regional Economic Strategy as a key driver - along with skills and innovation - for future economic success.

This environmental driver draws on the region's location strengths - its designated Heritage Coast, its landscapes, its wild places and habitats, as well as opportunities to gain economic benefit from environmental activity. In particular, the quality of life - often associated with the quality of the environment - is a major attraction for investment, businesses, workers and tourists.

## Why have the environment as a driver?

Developing the environment as a driver of a region's economy has two key aims:

- increasing economic competitiveness by reducing business costs through more efficient use of resources. Promoting efficiency in the use of energy and other resources benefits individual businesses and the regional economy as well as the wider environment;
- increasing productivity by developing sectors of the economy that achieve integrated economic and environmental benefits. Environmental goods are increasingly being sought by consumers and businesses and business development in these sectors can deliver significant growth

Other objectives include:

- integrating objectives and activities for both economic development and environmental management;
- promoting the identity of an area based on its environmental quality and sustainability, as part of inward investment strategies, improving the competitiveness of the region, and offering benefits to specific economic sectors (e.g. tourism) and businesses;
- helping the region make its own contribution to the European Union's agreed objective of limiting the rise of global average temperatures;
- helping local businesses and institutions meet the requirements of EU and national environmental legislation.

### Benefits for the region

Putting environment at the heart of economic development strategies has a wide range of benefits. The key ones are:

- conserving environmental resources brings economic benefits - in terms of increased resource efficiency - and social benefits, especially a better quality of life, as well as benefits to the environment itself;
- developing businesses in the environmental sector creates local champions in niche sectors which can drive local economies, create jobs and prosperity and develop new skills in the local population;
- developing environmental skills in businesses saves costs, minimises risks and promotes innovation within businesses;
- using the environment for branding and niche marketing increases competitiveness and marketing opportunities as well as highlighting and celebrating local distinctiveness;
- improving the quality of life and health of the population by reducing pollution cuts risks to human health;
- improving the attractiveness of the region increases investment and attracts new talent.

#### Case studies

##### 'Fat chance' turning cooking oils into a diesel-substitute, Malta

In 2004, Malta's largest producer of cooking fats and oils - the Edible Oil Company - came up with an innovative business solution. Instead of cooking oil going down the drain, it would power diesel cars and lorries. The project established a collection system involving restaurants and 24,000 households. The project integrated economic benefits with environmental improvement and even won the BBC World Challenge award. As well as creating a new business opportunity for the company, other benefits include reductions in both air pollution and Malta's dependence on imported fossil fuels. Key to the project's success was the co-operation of the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the government-owned waste management company.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For more information see [http://www.theworldchallenge.co.uk/competition\\_2005.php](http://www.theworldchallenge.co.uk/competition_2005.php)

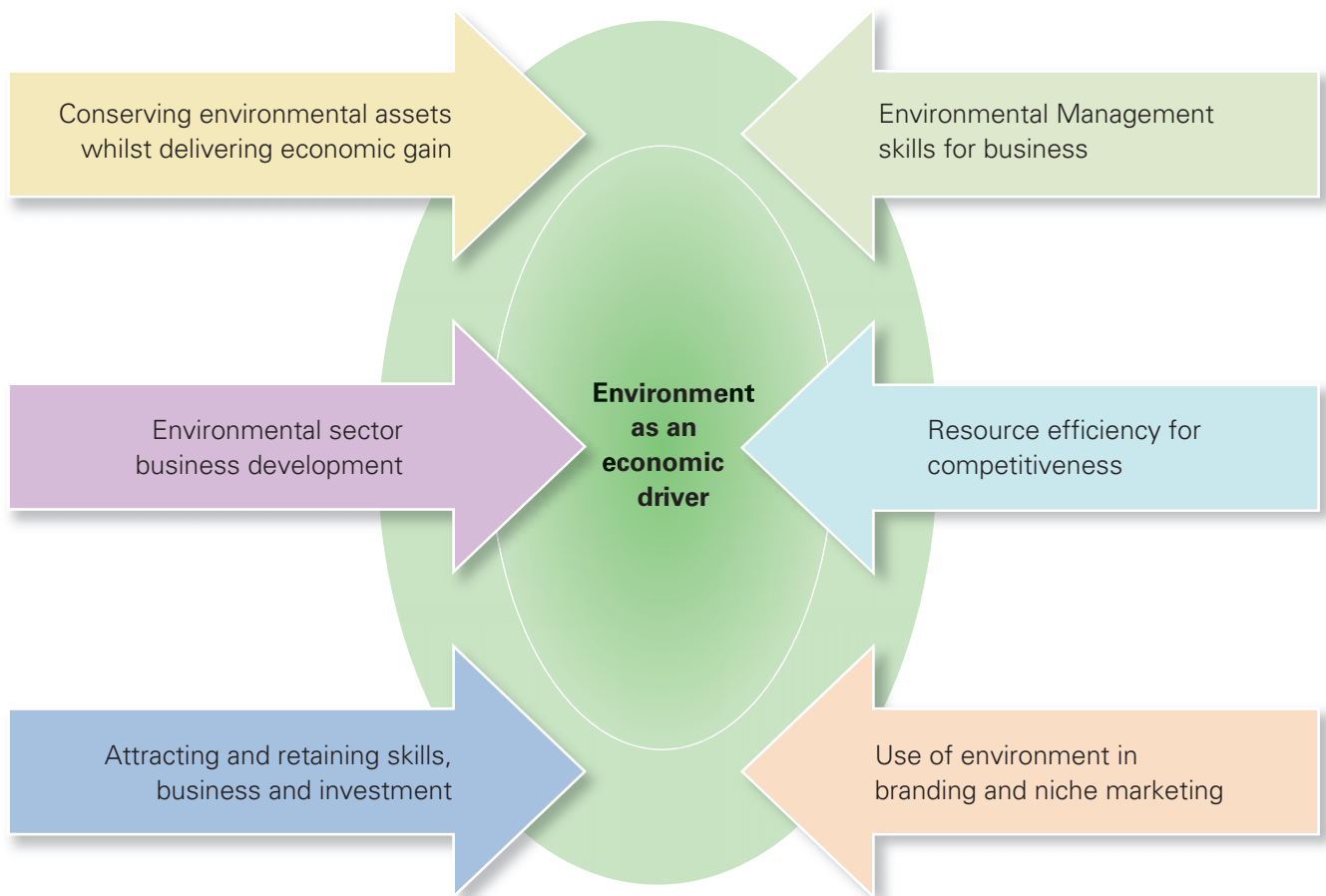
## How can the environment drive regional development programmes?

Following are some of the ways regional development programmes can creatively use environment to drive development:

- Conserving environmental assets whilst delivering economic gain: support to sustainable ways of resource-dependent activities like forestry and tourism; urban clean-up and revitalisation programmes.
- Environment sector business development: support to businesses which provide environmental services such as recycled products, renewable energy, etc; development of environmental services.
- Attracting and retaining skills, business, and investment: sustainable programmes improve the overall quality of life and investment climate in a region.
- Environmental management skills for business: programmes can require or support environmental management systems which raise awareness and lead to improved environmental performance
- Resource efficiency for competitiveness: enabling businesses and other institutions to reduce the use of energy and other raw materials to improve their economic performance
- Use of environment in branding and niche marketing: promoting natural and cultural resources to market a region's attractiveness for tourism and investment

These are represented in the diagram below.

### Environment as an economic driver<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup>Inspired by the Objective One Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. For more information see: [www.objectiveone.com](http://www.objectiveone.com). See also: <http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/environment/introduction.shtm>



## Tips for using environment as an economic driver

- Develop a programme vision which incorporates environmental issues, either by setting specific environmental objectives or by aiming more generally for sustainable development or increased sustainability in economic development. This encourages the incorporation of environment into all actions, not just those with specific environmental objectives. An example would be:  
Programme vision: 'To achieve significant and sustainable change in the prosperity of people, businesses and communities in the programme area, in ways which bring economic growth and greater social inclusion and enhance the natural and built environment.'
- Translate broad environmental data so that it has a clear impact on economic development objectives. Examples include: trends in energy costs; data showing visitors to natural environment attractions; and employment in environmental sectors. This can help engage programming bodies as it shows a direct relationship between environment and economy.
- Create new business opportunities: look at potential synergies between different businesses. You could start by looking at waste products, asking 'What can I do with this?'
- Programmes or authorities should set up affordable advisory services for SMEs on resource efficiency, environmental management skills, launching environmental businesses and so on. For example, the ENVISION project (UK)<sup>3</sup> helps businesses cut costs or save money and improve competitiveness through better environmental performance and credibility. It gives businesses five days of dedicated support and an expert 'one-stop shop' of high quality advice.
- Look at potential partnerships to reduce environmental impacts and make good business.
- Highlight and celebrate local distinctiveness, especially in food and drink, crafts and green tourism.

### Case studies

#### Tannins Project, Spain

The Tannins Project looked at the innovative use of wine industry by-products as a source of tannins for the leather industry instead of importing them. This derived maximum value from a wine industry waste which otherwise could be used for composting or energy generation. This use was especially attractive since large-scale wine production in Europe is largely in the same regions as centres of the tanning industry

### Case studies

#### Tideford Organics (beneficiary of ENVISION programme), UK

*"Our business is becoming much more energy and resource efficient, making us more competitive and enhancing our environmental credentials."*

Simon Baker, Managing Director  
Tideford Organic Foods Ltd

<sup>3</sup><http://www.envisionsw.org.uk/>

## Where can I find out more?

More information and lots of case studies are in the GRDP report *Making the case for environmental integration: Environment as an economic driver*, available on the CD-ROM in the toolkit.

The document also has links to key documents, references and further guidance.

## Partnership as a tool for sustainability



### What do we mean by 'partnership' in regional development programmes?

'Partnership' in regional development programmes means involving all stakeholders throughout the programme cycle. Experience across Europe shows that effective partnership leads to significant improvements in the sustainability and performance of regional development programmes. Partnership in all phases of the programme cycle - development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation - is recognised as an essential tool by the European Commission and EU Member States in several key legal documents (see box on the next page). The involvement of environmental partners, including environmental authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and others, creates better understanding of environmental integration in practice and better delivery of sustainable development across all aspects of programmes.

This fact sheet shows the importance of partnership for the integration of environment into regional development programmes, with a focus on involving environmental partners in all phases of the programme cycle.

## Environmental partnership in regional development: legal and political basis

### EU Cohesion Policy, the General Regulation

Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, obliges Member States to create partnerships with relevant authorities and other bodies. It stresses the importance of involving environmental partners: *“Each Member State shall designate the most representative partners at national, regional and local level and in the economic, social, environmental or other spheres ... taking account of the need to promote ... sustainable development through the integration of environmental protection and improvement requirements.”*<sup>1</sup>

### EU Cohesion Policy, the Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013

These guidelines for carrying out Cohesion Policy funding programmes, issued by the European Commission, stress the importance of partnership: *“A related, and highly important, factor determining the effectiveness of cohesion policy is the quality of the partnership between all stakeholders, including those at regional and local level, in the preparation and implementation of the programmes.”*<sup>2</sup>

### EU Rural Development Policy, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Art. 6 of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, also stipulates that assistance shall be implemented in consultation with partners, including *“any other appropriate body representing civil society, non-governmental organisations, including environmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women.”*<sup>3</sup>

### The Aarhus Convention

The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Aarhus, 1998 provides for public participation in the preparation of - among others - all strategic documents about the environment. Since EU members and the Commission itself are parties to the Aarhus Convention, its structure and principles can be used to interpret how the partnership principle is implemented in practice.

## What are the benefits of working in partnership?

- The involvement of a broad range of key stakeholders, including environmental partners, leads to clear environmental, economic and social goals for the programme, which makes it more sustainable and effective.
- Better-informed applicants mean better delivery of better projects. Partnership strengthens the local sense of ownership of the projects funded, as well as the legitimacy of economic and social development policy.
- Partners who know the needs of the region/target group can help to develop a more targeted programme that responds to local needs. They can also promote the programme in their own target group, resulting in the local community having more understanding of what a programme plans to support.
- Partnership can forge links between different types of funding programmes, e.g. sectoral programmes, different regions, etc.
- Partnership strengthens the democratic decision-making process.
- Transparency, openness and prevention of misuse and corruption in the project selection process help the smooth implementation of the programme.
- Working in partnership leads to better absorption of funds and more effective use of taxpayers' money, through better selection of projects according to their quality.

<sup>1</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newregl0713_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/index_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm)

## How can I develop and maintain a good partnership?

A strong, effective partnership for development programmes takes not only determination and perseverance but also institutional and personal continuity and time. Ideally, the partnership should have a broad range of relevant institutions, organisations, and individuals who are knowledgeable about and/or have a clear stake in the outcome of the programmes.

For Cohesion Policy programmes, the legislative requirements and guidance from the European Commission indicate that environmental authorities should be involved. An effective environmental partnership will also have key environmental non-governmental organisations and other important stakeholders. These may include:

- municipalities and local authorities (their associations and informal or formal networks);
- other relevant public authorities;
- trade unions;

- organisations providing social services;
- cross-sectoral NGO networks;
- economic development organisations;
- bodies responsible for promoting equality between men and women;
- professional associations (chambers of commerce, farmers' associations, etc.);
- universities, think-tanks, innovation centres, research and development institutions;
- community groups (if important for the programme focus).

Partnership works best when it starts at the beginning, i.e. the design or programming stage, and lasts throughout the programme cycle. The following diagram shows a series of actions which programme managers or authorities should follow to develop and maintain fruitful partnerships during the programming/planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages of a programme.

### A model for a good partnership





## Tips for effective partnerships

*"Too often in the past, the road to participation has been paved with good intentions only to lead to time-consuming and wasteful dead-ends which result in disillusionment and resentment for all concerned. Participation, like democracy, has meant many things to many people. The opportunities for participation are there to be grasped but only if all those involved have a common understanding and share a common language<sup>5</sup>."*

- Effective partnership requires timely involvement of partners in all stages of the programme: preparing programmes, budgeting, management, monitoring and evaluation of assistance.
- Engage the right partners in the work at the right time - the very beginning of the programming process. Do everything possible to keep partners involved throughout the programme cycle, as it is very demanding to start each step with different people or different organisations.

### Case studies

#### Build on existing experience, UK

The Department for Communities and Local Government's guidance Operational Programme Template for the English European Regional Development Fund Programmes: 2007-13 has a section dealing with cross-cutting themes. It also states that in drawing up their programmes, it is important that regions build on the lessons from the current programmes and make use of expertise of existing Environmental Sustainability Theme Managers, statutory environmental agencies and other environmental partners.

- Remember that capacity-building and training are critical for environmental partnership, particularly in understanding environmental sustainability principles and how they interact with regional development. Environmental authorities and/or NGOs can train programme managing authorities, appraisal and monitoring committee members and project applicants.
- Consider the financial help needed for certain partners (e.g. SMEs, small municipalities and NGOs) to act as partners. Their direct costs (travel, overnight stay and copies of the discussion material) should be paid.
- Give partners clear roles in programme development, project appraisal, monitoring, and evaluation and give them access to the decision-making process. Use the partnership to build trust between different interest groups and provide a common basis for future development.
- Provide partners with timely access to information.
- Use a mix of formal and informal meetings, workshops and other means to do the work of the partnership.

### Case studies

#### Laboratory on SEA, Italy

The Regional Environmental Authority in Sicily and other Italian regions organised common SEA training days for staff of both environmental and programme Managing Authorities. This helped experts from these authorities work together and recognise the benefits and challenges of the partnership in the SEA process.

<sup>5</sup>Batson, B, Management in the Voluntary Sector Unit, Leeds Metropolitan University, in Wilcox, D: The Guide to Effective Participation. London, 1994. See <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/index.htm>

## Where can I find out more?

The GRDP report *Partnership as a tool to green Regional Development Programmes - Experience and Recommendations* has more detailed information on good partnerships and how to carry them out. It also has success stories from across

the GRDP partnership. It is available on the CD-ROM included in the toolkit. The document also has links to key documents, references and further guidance.



## Creating networks to promote environmental integration



### What do we mean by 'networks'?

Throughout Europe, there are regional, national and international networks which unite programme stakeholders in sharing information and experience and co-ordinating actions for environment and regional development programmes. In the context of greening development programmes, networks bring together those working on economic development and environmental issues to strengthen the synergy between the environment and economic growth. Well-organised and focused networks are key tools for integrating environmental issues with economic and social objectives in regional development programmes.

## What are the different types of networks?

**National Networks:** A national network co-ordinates environmental issues across all areas of development programmes in one country, shares experience between organisations and develops guidance and tools for programmes. It typically consists of programme managers (economic or planning authorities) and environmental authorities at national and regional levels. Other partners may include European Commission representatives and relevant external bodies such as research institutes, environmental agencies and NGOs. See the boxes below for examples in Italy and Spain.

**International Networks:** These give programme and authority representatives the chance to meet like-minded professionals and officials from other countries, share experience, support each other and co-ordinate positions on issues. International

networks can have a formal set-up, such as the European Network of Environmental Authorities (Enea) managed by the European Commission DG Environment (see box on the next page). They can also be more informal, such as the co-operation between countries fostered by international organisations and NGOs, or through Interreg projects, such as the GRDP.

**Informal Networks** (at different levels): An informal network can consist of simply a series of meetings between programme representatives, environmental specialists, etc. There is an example of such a network in the UK, where Environmental Sustainability Theme Managers (ESTMs) from regional programmes work together to share experience from different regions. The ESTMs meet at least twice per year and communicate regularly to share and co-ordinate their work.

### Case studies

#### The Italian Network of Environmental and Managing Authorities of the Community Structural Funds

In 1998 Italy set up a formal Network of Environmental and Managing Authorities at central and regional level, with the participation of DG Environment, DG Regional Policy and DG Agriculture. The network is managed jointly by the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Environment. The network promotes the integration of environment in all development programmes through technical support, training and exchange of information. It strengthens relationships between authorities in charge of different sectors; it increases knowledge of environmental topics; and above all, it facilitates the integration of environmental and sustainable policies in Structural Funds Programmes. The network is supported by a task force of experts with different skills who give technical help to national and regional environmental authorities working on regional development programmes. The network has also produced technical and methodological guidelines, studies and analyses on specific environmental issues, and monitors environmental integration<sup>1</sup>.

#### The Spanish Environmental Authorities Network

Established in 1997, the Spanish Environmental Authorities Network is a forum for co-operation and co-ordination between authorities responsible for the environment and for the programming and management of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund at different levels. The network is managed by the Ministry of Environment. Its objectives are to ensure the integration of the environment in activities co-financed by Structural Funds and to monitor the implementation of, and compliance with, European environmental legislation. The network also supports working groups on incorporating environmental aspects in different economic sectors, and has produced a range of useful guidelines and methodologies (e.g. on strategic environmental assessment). It has promoted environmental awareness by developing the "Environmental Awareness Module" for training courses and "Good Environmental Practice Manuals" for various professions<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>For more information see <http://www.reteambientale.it/eng/home.asp>

<sup>2</sup>For more information see <http://www.mma.es/portal/secciones/raa/>

## Case studies

**The European Network of Environmental Authorities for Cohesion Policy (EENA)**

The network brings together national environmental authorities from all EU members, representatives of Directorate General Environment and other relevant Directorates, plus observers from non-governmental, international and other organisations. The network enables members to:

- discuss and co-ordinate positions on environment and Cohesion Policy;
- learn about new EU initiatives and policies;
- share experience;
- develop joint reports, guidance, tools and other products.

EENA is currently a network of national-level institutions but its ambition is to become an umbrella for national environmental networks which address development programmes. EENA is also helping countries set up environmental networks for Cohesion Policy, where feasible<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>3</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/structural\\_funds\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/structural_funds_en.htm)



## What are the benefits of a network?

Different types of networks serve different purposes, as described above. Most offer the chance to compare your experience with others from different organisations, regions, and/or countries, and to co-ordinate your work with important stakeholders and authorities. The following are some of the many benefits from participating in networks.

### Increased efficiency through co-operation and co-ordination

- Networks encourage and facilitate systematic and efficient communication among their members. They help avoid misunderstanding and facilitate the finding of common ground.
- Well-structured co-ordination between authorities, organisations and stakeholders in regional development programmes makes it easier to follow the complex processes needed for EU-funded programmes.
- A network can be used to promote environmental awareness among the general public.
- Continuous and structured collaboration at all stages of programme development helps reduce possible conflicts between strategies for economic growth on the one hand, and environment on the other. It helps programme developers and managers realise that environmental integration is a pre-condition for quality economic development.

### Environmental expertise, tools, guidance

- The development of good quality, sustainable programmes and projects requires expertise and specialised knowledge for authorities in charge of a development programme.
- Network partners can work together to produce:
  - common guidelines and methodologies;
  - recommended indicators, procedures and criteria for better appraisal of projects;
  - information on how environmental policy principles have been incorporated in the programmes;
  - procedures for co-operation among specific authorities.

### Sharing experience, learning from others

- Networks bring together the experience of different programmes and regions, and also promote the exchange of knowledge, opinions and good practice.
- Networks help regional development programmes to better reflect European and other sustainable development policies and instruments by demonstrating how they are implemented elsewhere.
- An effective network enables members to meet others with similar interests, concerns, problems, etc. It can be a springboard to other useful contacts, including twinning of regions with common needs or different development levels (e.g. co-operation between convergence and competitiveness regions).
- Networks can build the capacity of national institutions to develop national and multi-regional strategies, policies, plans and programmes, by giving them a better overview of the conditions and experiences of other regions.

## How can a network be structured?

The diagram on the below suggests a model for a national environmental network for regional development programmes, including EU-funded programmes. It is based on the Italian and Spanish networks described earlier. It reflects the key

features of a national network that links both national and regional authorities representing environmental and economic development sectors, and involves other bodies and individuals on an expert or advisory basis.

### A model for a national network

#### Network Tasks

- Promote and assist compliance with European and national environmental legislation.
- Encourage integration of the environment into actions co-funded by regional development programmes and/or EU funds in order to promote sustainable regional development.
- Produce studies and analyses to help national and regional/local authorities in activities linked to the development programmes.
- Exchange knowledge, opinions, experience and best practice among members.
- Produce guidelines, methodologies, project appraisal criteria and indicators

#### Network Operations

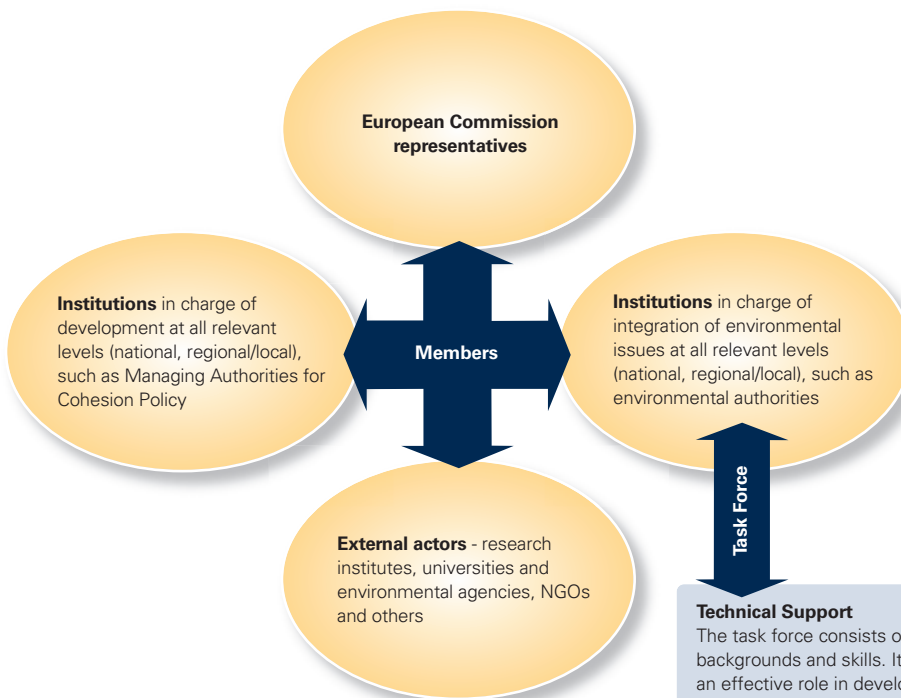
**Statute:** sets out the mandate, duration, members, goals and functioning rules.

**Plenary session:** held at least twice a year to discuss topics of common interest, update the activities, exchange experience, consult and endorse guidelines/documents prepared by working groups.

**Thematic workshops:** address specific topics, such as agriculture, industry, Natura 2000 etc., depending on specific needs.

**Studies and analyses:** investigate topics and serve as a starting point for further in-depth research at working group level.

**Working groups:** small groups of selected members and independent experts who work on a specific topic or methodology in order to support the members' activities in their geographical area. All working groups have a formal mandate that identifies goals, timetables and products and their results are approved by the network in plenary session.



#### Network Bodies

**Co-ordination Unit:** composed of representatives of key economic and environmental authorities at national and/or regional levels, it prepares plenary and advisory meetings and co-ordinates working groups.

**Technical Secretariat:** carries out logistical and administrative activities; based in one of the national authorities.

**Advisory Body:** representatives of a range of relevant sectors and institutions; provides strategic advice to the network and supports decisions about the dissemination of the network's products and ideas.

**Environment Thematic Group:** analyses the environmental aspects of programmes and co-ordinates related activities; it also acts as contact point with the programme Monitoring Committee. It meets at least four times per year.

#### Technical Support

The task force consists of full-time experts with multi-disciplinary backgrounds and skills. It supports environmental authorities in playing an effective role in development programmes and projects.

Its number and composition depends on the size and scope of the programme and the characteristics of a specific region/area. Task force experts can be based in the environmental or Managing Authorities. It is possible to set up different task forces at national and regional levels. Examples of task force activities include:

- proposing environmental elements (criteria and indicators) for inclusion in calls for projects;
- carrying out the environmental assessment of proposed projects;
- assistance with water, waste and parks management plans;
- preparing state of environment reports;
- carrying out strategic environmental assessments;
- developing guidance and procedures to evaluate programmes from environmental and sustainability perspectives.

With EU-funded programmes, a task force can be supported by technical assistance funding matched with domestic resources. It is recommended that the task force is supported for the programme's lifetime.



## Tips for creating networks

- Ensure there are enough human and financial resources to set up a network. The network can be funded through an additional budget line in the development programme or (in the case of EU-funded programmes) the technical assistance budget.
- Ensure that high-ranking officials and/or politicians lead the network if possible. A good network needs champions from both environmental and development authorities.
- Appoint a network manager (or secretariat or co-ordination unit) to co-ordinate activities. A good option is to rotate the position between national and regional levels, and between development and environmental authorities.
- Develop effective information tools (website, forum and publications).
- To make the network most effective, try to set it up in the early stages of programme development.
- Don't make the network too formal – focus on giving added value to the different programmes and keep administrative burdens to a minimum.
- Record the network management and organisational structure in a document signed by all parties. This should list the roles of bodies represented, as well as showing the decision-making process and frequency of meetings. This document may be supported by an operational plan for systematic co-operation between authorities.

### Where can I find out more?

More details can be found in the GRDP *Networking Report*. This covers the experience of several Member States in EU-funded programmes.

The report is on the CD-ROM included in the toolkit and has links to key documents, references and further guidance.

# Strategic Environmental Assessment



## What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental effects of proposed plans, programmes and policies. In the EU, SEA is required for regional development plans and programmes if they meet the criteria specified in the Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.<sup>1</sup>

SEA is an excellent tool for helping programme development authorities address environmental considerations at the earliest stage of decision-making, alongside economic and social factors. It allows plan and programme developers to achieve both environmental and development benefits and advance innovation and sustainable development.

The development authorities are responsible for carrying out SEA and can either make the assessment themselves using internal experts or contract consultants to do it. Because the planning process and the SEA share a similar pattern, SEA can be easily integrated in the plan or programme development process or in the ex-ante evaluation - although the latter must be external and independent.

This fact sheet shows how regional development planning and SEA are mutually-reinforcing tools within one robust planning system which will deliver a more sustainable approach to development. It also gives practical tips for development authorities and/or consultants in carrying out SEA for regional development programmes.

<sup>1</sup>For more information on this see the EC paper '*Relationship between the SEA Directive and Community Funds*'  
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006\\_0639en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0639en01.pdf)

## What are the benefits of SEA for regional development programmes?

SEA is sometimes seen as merely a legal requirement or even a burden, because it is an additional process which has to be done alongside planning and programme development, and requires time and resources.

However, experience has shown that SEA is well worth the investment. Consider the following:

### **SEA strengthens the regional plan or programme:**

SEA is a thorough consideration of environmental constraints and opportunities for development. It also involves checking that the environmental and development objectives of a plan or programme are consistent. This means that the entire planning process is checked for its logic, consistency and applicability by experts and in a public consultation process. Issues which might not have been considered can be incorporated and conflicting sectoral objectives can be reconciled. SEA may not answer all the questions but it enables planning agencies and other stakeholders to seek win-win options. This will in turn facilitate the design of better projects.

*"The South West of England used the SEA process as an integrated part of the process to develop its new Regional Economic Strategy. The SEA helped the region take a structured approach to assessing environmental impacts - something that is critical if we are to deliver our aspiration to achieve economic growth within environmental limits. The process also helped the Regional Development Agency develop stronger relationships with environmental bodies - links which are being maintained to help ensure the sustainable delivery of the Strategy."*

Jonathan Coe, South West Regional Development Agency, UK

### **SEA saves time and money in plan and programme development and implementation:**

Development objectives and measures with serious environmental consequences will be difficult to implement. SEA alerts decision-makers at an early stage to problematic development options. It also reduces the need for subsequent work to remedy environmental problems. This makes the planning process more efficient.

*"In Romania, the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism carried out a SEA for the Sectoral Operational Programme Transport, as legally required. It was the first time the Ministry had carried out such an assessment, and although the process was complex, it ran smoothly thanks to the assistance of environmental experts. The SEA found that the proposed programme will have significant environmental effects. Among the mitigation measures proposed in the SEA report, a special focus is given to Natura 2000 sites, as well as to the environmental selection criteria, so that support is given in priority to projects using the best available technologies, energy efficient solutions, recycling and public transport. In addition, the programme monitoring system will include environmental monitoring, to further mitigate possible negative environmental effects during programme implementation. The SEA improved both the environmental aspects of the programme and its overall quality."*

Catalin Costache, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism, Romania

### **SEA improves public trust and confidence in regional development programmes:**

SEA requires public consultation and reporting, which means dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders. SEA raises questions on the environmental, economic and social effects of the plan or programme, which otherwise may not be raised. Controversial issues in the programme can be resolved at an early stage.

*"In the Marche Region SEA was a very important tool for the elaboration of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. The evaluation of probable environmental effects allowed us to strengthen our approaches to rural development by making them more sustainable. The public participation process required by SEA made it possible for the regional administration to share its strategic message with the general public, rather than just the agricultural community. SEA also enabled us to develop a system for monitoring, evaluating, and correcting environmental effects throughout the programme."*

Cristina Martellini, Managing Authority of the Marche Region Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, Italy

## How can SEA be effectively carried out for regional development programmes?

Good practice shows that the most useful SEAs start early in the planning process and correspond to each step of the planning process. The following model

illustrates the relationship between a typical (generalised) regional plan or programme development process, and a parallel SEA process.



## Tips for carrying out an effective SEA

- Start SEA when the plan or programme elaboration begins and use it to provide early and frequent inputs. Do not retrofit SEA at the end of the planning process.
- Focus the SEA on environmental issues relevant to the scope and scale of the regional development programme. The nature of regional development programmes can vary considerably depending on the development needs of the particular region, so it is important to focus on issues likely to be affected by the specific programme. Include relevant data on environment and the economy, such as the use of environmental management systems by businesses and use of renewable energy.
- Ensure that all the main environmental issues are covered, but do not get bogged down in excessive scope or detail or use information simply because it is available. Consult on the scope of SEA to determine the significant environmental issues relevant to the plan or programme that derive from its strategic level and objectives.
- Use SEA to identify win-win opportunities for promoting the environment and economic development simultaneously.
- Remember that the analyses carried out under SEA can be expanded to cover social and economic issues. SEA can be widened into an overall sustainability assessment of the plan or programme.
- Do not forget to consider both positive and negative impacts of the proposed plan or programme and do not neglect its indirect impacts. Describe impacts in terms of their scale and reversibility, and consider the cumulative effects of all proposed measures in the programme on the relevant environmental objectives.
- Use lessons from the past, recommendations from related SEAs or experience from implementing similar plans in other regions if you lack local data. Acknowledge major uncertainties - do not try to hide them.
- Try to reach consensus between environmental authorities, experts, planners and other key stakeholders on environmental objectives and issues. Ideally, use the SEA process to integrate them as horizontal environmental objectives for the plan or programme.
- If proposed measures or activities cannot be amended, the SEA can propose conditions for their implementation. Consider what conditions for programme delivery are needed to ensure that specific environmental impacts can be minimised during implementation of a plan or programme.
- Keep reports and documents succinct, and use plain language so that they can be understood by decision-makers, authorities and the public.
- Remember that you cannot do a proper SEA without basic resources. Always consider the costs of an SEA when preparing a budget for the planning process.

### Where can I find more about this?

There are many tools and sources of support for SEA in general and in regional development programmes. The tools are generally aimed at environmental authorities, plan or programme development bodies/planners and experts who carry out SEA.

Recommendations for carrying out SEA for regional development programmes can be found in the GRDP *Handbook on SEA for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013*. The handbook is among official documents on the website<sup>2</sup> of European Commission DG Regional Policy and is on the CD-ROM in the toolkit. Chapter 6 of the Handbook has

links to key documents, references and further guidance.

The DG Environment website has a section<sup>3</sup> with studies, reports and guidance on the implementation of SEA. This site has the *Handbook on Environmental Assessment of Regional Development Plans and EU Structural Funds Programmes* (EC DG Environment, 1998), as well as the EC guidance on implementation of the SEA Directive.

<sup>2</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/working/sf2000\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/sf2000_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup>For more information see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/eia/sea-support.htm>



## Greening projects for growth and jobs



### Why green programmes?

Every year billions of Euros are spent on regional development and economic and social cohesion throughout Europe. With all this spending comes a tremendous opportunity to achieve environmental sustainability alongside economic growth and job creation. Integrating the environment in regional development programmes can improve a region's competitive advantage, save resources and money, create a positive public image, manage risks and result in easy compliance with policies and funding requirements.<sup>1</sup> But how can you do it in practice - how can you create the conditions which will ultimately result in more sustainable investments, i.e. greener projects?

This fact sheet suggests actions that regional development programme managers can take to foster the development and implementation of greener programmes and projects, and provides examples of the results achieved around Europe.

<sup>1</sup>For more about the benefits of environmental integration, see the GRDP Toolkit introduction and the fact sheet 'Environment as an Economic Driver.'

## What are the benefits of greening projects?

Projects that bring environmental benefits on a par with socio-economic benefits - what we refer to as 'green projects' - offer a number of advantages:

- Green projects **increase the competitiveness of your region** and benefit specific economic sectors (e.g. tourism) and individual businesses. Greener regions, industries and businesses are usually not competing on price but on quality, offering a sustained competitive advantage.
- Listing environmental benefits in a project description is a **strong selling point** when applying for regional funding.
- Green projects **save money** - they achieve more with less resources and energy.
- Green projects create **social and economic opportunities**, such as niche markets targeting environmentally-conscious consumers and employment markets for 'green jobs'. They also stimulate innovation by encouraging people to think about the use of innovative environmental technologies.

### Case studies

#### Energy saving lighting in Tukums Municipality, Latvia

Tukums City Council wanted to reduce night-time street crime while improving the town's nightlife and making it more attractive to visitors. The Council installed energy-efficient street lights, saving €37,000 a year in energy costs while reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 365 tonnes.

### Case studies

#### ReMaDeDe Kernow, UK

ReMaDe Kernow is helping manufacturing and retail enterprises use recycled materials. It is estimated that by 2015, more than 550 jobs and €31 million a year could be generated through making better use of the 450,000 tonnes of rubbish that goes into landfill every year<sup>2</sup>.

- Programme and project **stakeholders and wider communities** like green projects. They are more acceptable to a wider range of people and generate a positive public image for the organisations involved.
- Green projects consider **environmental risks** as part of a risk management strategy. Reduced risk means a better chance of success.

Greening projects has worked in many regions, why not in yours?

### Case studies

#### Heaven Scent project, UK

A garden nursery called Heaven Scent in the South West region offers supportive services, personal development training, work placements, employment advice and skills training for people recovering from mental ill-health. The nursery avoids waste production as it recycles almost everything - from used plants pots to old plant material and water<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>For more information see <http://www.remadekernow.co.uk/>

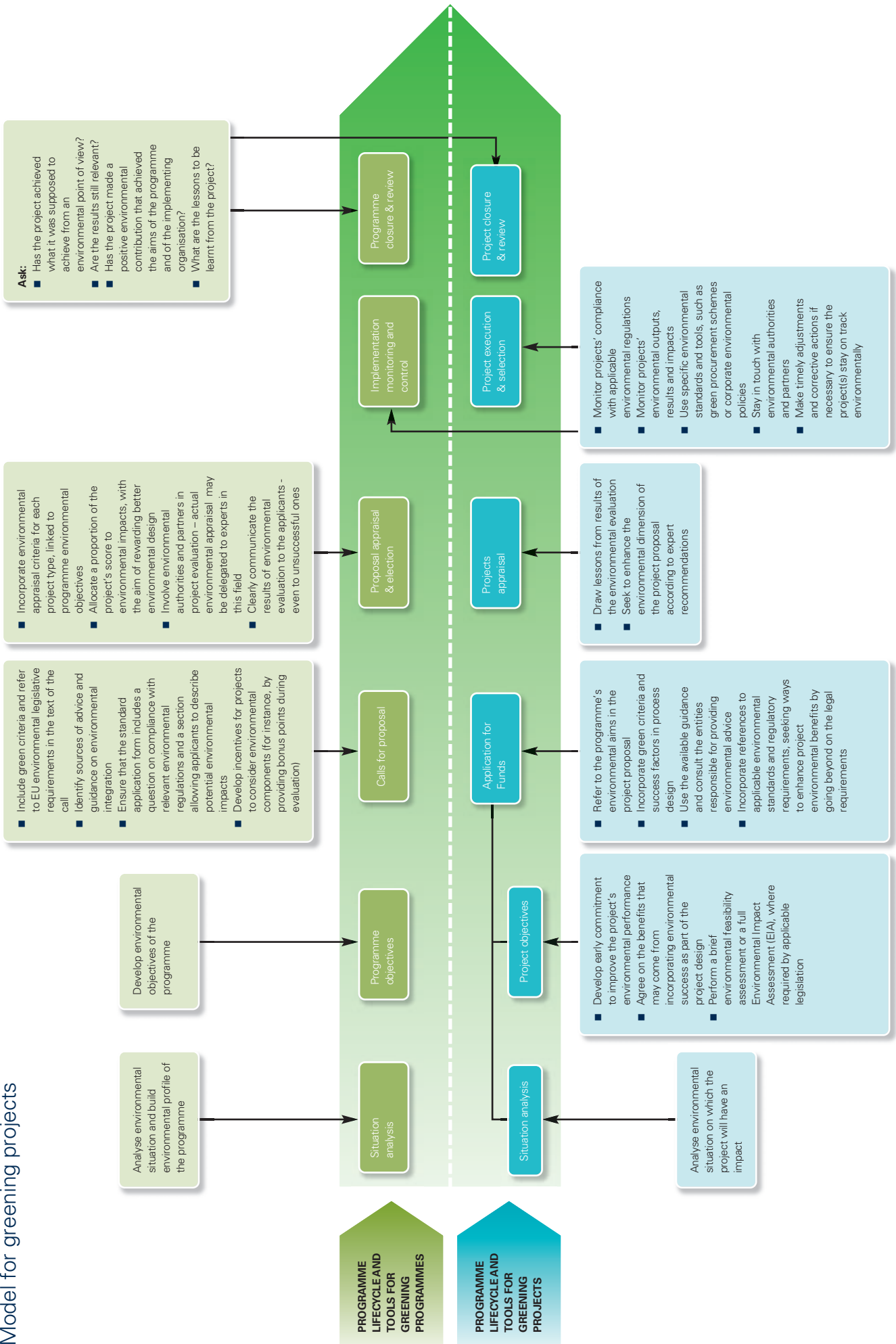
<sup>3</sup>For more information see [http://www.objectiveone.com/client/cases/env\\_cases/env\\_pdfs/HeavenScent.pdf](http://www.objectiveone.com/client/cases/env_cases/env_pdfs/HeavenScent.pdf)

## How is it done?

Green projects like the ones described above depend on the efforts of development authorities or programme managers at every stage of the programme and project lifecycles. The diagram on the next page has a 'pathway' depicting a typical

cycle for both programmes and projects. Along the pathway it suggests actions for each stage of every cycle, from initial analyses to final monitoring and evaluation.

# Model for greening projects



## Tips for greening projects

- **Make good use of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):** A good SEA will not only ensure environmental integration into the content of your programme, but will also improve the quality of the overall programming process and resulting projects.
- **Do not give up** if the programme as drafted is less than ideal from an environmental perspective. As shown in the diagram, there are still many ways in which programme managers, environmental authorities and other stakeholders can encourage the development of greener projects during programme implementation.
- **Involve environmental partners:** Environmental authorities, NGOs and other interest groups can play an important role at all stages of programme development and implementation by providing data, information and expert advice on environmental issues and impacts, compliance with legislation and policies and public opinion.
- **Improve the capacity and skills of programming authorities and project managers and applicants:** This can be done through regular

### Case studies

#### Environmental partnership in project appraisal, Hungary

In Hungary, experts from environmental NGOs co-operated with the Managing Authority for Structural Funds to ensure environmental sustainability in the quality control of proposals during project selection. As a result, regional development agencies changed their pre-selection and scoring practices to give more weight to environmental criteria and the Managing Authority adopted new guidance on environmental aspects for applicants. This also influenced other Managing Authorities to consider environmental criteria for their 2007-2013 programmes.

### Case studies

#### Specialised personnel make a difference, UK

In the UK, specialised environmental programme personnel (known as Environmental Sustainability Theme Managers, or ESTMs) train applicants and programming bodies and develop written materials and guidance. Their regular contact with programming bodies and applicants allows them to explore issues in more detail and provide more timely and relevant advice, which has resulted in greener programmes and projects.

training, mentoring, development of written guidance and tools, co-ordination and networking at national and EU level. It is also important to ensure funds are available to develop capacity-building and advisory services.

- **Raise awareness and promote the programme:** Illustrate how better environmental performance brings increased competitiveness. Focus on changing the general perception of 'environment' as a set of regulations to one of opportunity for better project results. In many cases this will take a shift in thinking and behaviour from programme and project managers.

### Case studies

#### Informal environmental champion, Malta

In Malta, all public agencies have an informal environmental champion who supports colleagues and managers and persuades them of the need for environmental integration at corporate level. It was found that these champions not only help improve corporate environmental performance but also create a general predisposition towards developing and implementing greener projects throughout Malta's public sector.

## Where can I find out more?

The GRDP handbook *Greening Projects for Growth and Jobs*, based on the collective experience of partners from more than a dozen countries and regions, has practical suggestions and tools for achieving environmental objectives through

projects financed under regional development programmes. It is on the CD-ROM in the toolkit, and also has links to key documents, references and further guidance.



# Greening agriculture and rural development programmes



## Why green programmes?

Half of the land in the EU is farmed, and farming and environment have a profound influence on each other. The new Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 aims to improving sustainability in rural areas in line with the Gothenburg sustainability goals, alongside the Lisbon strategy goals of boosting growth and creating jobs. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) now aims to help achieve sustainable development by increasing its encouragement of healthy, high-quality products, environmentally-sustainable production methods (including organic production), renewable raw materials and protecting biodiversity.

However, experience to date in greening rural development policy has been at best patchy across the EU regions. Indeed, in many cases agricultural policy remains focused on production at the expense of environmental goals, despite the opportunities that come from adopting a more sustainable approach.

This fact sheet summarises how national and regional authorities can adopt a more sustainable approach to their rural development programmes. It gives examples from different regions of the EU of programmes that have achieved lasting benefits. It also looks ahead to further discussions on CAP reform, due in 2008, and suggests where more substantial policy changes might be made.



## Mechanisms to green rural development programmes

### General Provisions

General provisions applying to all CAP measures are designed to promote a sustainable approach to production. The key provisions are:

- **Setting cross-compliance as a condition for direct payments.** Cross-compliance means complying with Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs). Failure to comply with these and good practices may result in direct aid being partially or totally reduced or having to pay it back in full. Member States develop regional and national codes of GAECs which must correspond to the type of agriculture that a sensible farmer would carry out in the region, including complying with environmental legislation.
- **Decoupling** direct aid paid to farmers from the amount they produce creates a more environmentally sound basis for direct support. In particular, decoupling can be used to increase support for disadvantaged areas and systems that are extensive or environmentally beneficial. For example, the UK has a regional scheme that divides England into three sub-regions: particularly disadvantaged mountainous areas; other particularly disadvantaged areas; and areas with large holdings that are not disadvantaged. This allows for a more targeted approach to preserving and enhancing environmental quality in the different sub-regions.
- **Modulation** is EU jargon for the process of diverting a small percentage of EU direct aid committed to farmers (currently five per cent on all payments above €5,000) to fund rural development measures. Modulation to date in most Member States has had only limited environmental benefit, but there is potential for future benefits if modulation supports effective measures to promote environmental quality.
- Member States now have the **option of retaining** up to 10% of the total aid they each receive and redistributing it to agricultural programmes important for protecting or improving the environment and/or the quality and marketing of agricultural products.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment** (of publicly-funded programmes) and **Environmental Impact Assessment** (of individual projects) are designed to ensure that any activity which receives public funds will not harm the environment.
- **EU Forestry strategy** promotes environmental objectives as well as competitiveness. Maintaining productive capacity, resilience and biological diversity are key factors for a healthy forest ecosystem. Forests have a vital role in achieving the EC's Gothenburg objectives on sustainable development and the targets set in the 6th EC Environment Action Programme. But implementation on the ground is patchy and opportunities for environmental benefits are often missed.
- **Axis 3 of the new Rural Development Regulation – improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy** - allows measures to promote and enhance the rural environment. These include diversification such as bioenergy production on farms; basic services for the rural population such as biomass district heating; development of rural municipalities; and conservation and enhancement of the rural heritage, including nature protection and natural parks.

### Case studies

#### Biomass heating plants, Austria

In Austria, subsidies for biomass heating plants and the production of biofuels had a significant impact on the development of rural areas. In 2004 about 320 plants were subsidised. Together with national subsidies, about €17 million was spent, leveraging investments in biomass of about €46 million. Although 2004 was an extraordinary successful year for biomass and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in the rural development programme, past years have shown a similar picture. In this way the agricultural sector contributes significantly to Austria's climate change strategy for reaching its national Kyoto goal. Infrastructure development is a key factor in stimulating rural development and helps enhance an area's attractiveness as a place to live and as a location for investment by small enterprises.

## Agri-Environment Measures

As well as general measures, there are specific measures designed to achieve the environmental integration of rural development and CAP funds. Agri-environment measures (AEMs) are available for farmers willing to farm in a way that respects the environment and goes beyond applying customary good agricultural practices. AEMs are relatively diverse and adapted to national, regional and local conditions, which makes them a highly-refined tool for environmental integration. They have two key objectives: reducing the environmental hazards of modern agriculture and preserving nature and cultivated lands. These are the only measures for rural development that the Member States must include in their rural development plans (RDP).

Member States have considerable discretion, however, in how they implement agri-environmental measures. The rural development programme in Sweden is focused almost exclusively on biodiversity, while Austria and Italy spend more than half their RDP budget on measures with an environmental dimension. But in Holland, Spain and Greece this figure fails to reach 20%. The percentage of holdings with AEMs varies from 98% in Finland, 86% in Sweden and 82% in Austria to less than 10% in Spain, Holland and Greece, with the EU-15 averaging 25%<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to AEMs, other measures in Rural Development Programmes may be used to improve environmental integration in agriculture. They include set-aside, support for young farmers and compensatory payments for Less Favoured Areas (LFAs). This last measure has been widely used to support areas of extensive production that respect the environment. But unlike the AEMs, which are linked to specific environmental commitments by the producer, LFA compensation payments do not allow discrimination in favour of farms where operations benefit the environment.

### Case studies

#### Local Agenda 21 and Leader+ in Austria

Austria's prime example of the combination of Leader and a Local Agenda 21- process is the "Mühlviertler Alm". This is an association of nine local authorities with about 16,000 people in a rural area of Upper Austria. In 1995 the region joined the Leader II programme which subsidised initial projects important for the region's development. In 2001 the region was selected for the Leader+ programme and also started a Local Agenda 21 process. The latter was important in determining that sustainable development was to be the way forward for the region and for integrating the region's inhabitants into that process. In a series of workshops, interested people and all local authorities developed visions, goals, principles and measures for the region's sustainable future, which were then incorporated in the Future-book. Implementation of the Future-book through projects is supported by grants from the Leader programme.

LEADER<sup>2</sup>, under Axis 4 of the new Rural Development Regulation, supports a bottom-up, community-led local development strategy that builds on local needs and strengths and combines all three objectives – competitiveness, environment and quality of life/ diversification. Integrated approaches involving farmers, foresters and other rural players can safeguard and enhance the local natural and cultural heritage, raise environmental awareness and invest in and promote specialty products, tourism and renewable resources and energy.

<sup>1</sup>EEA Report 2/2006 - Integration of environment into EU agriculture policy - the IRENA indicator-based assessment report , page 40  
[http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea\\_report\\_2006\\_2/en](http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea_report_2006_2/en)

<sup>2</sup>For more information see

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm)

## Link to Structural Funds

From 2007 the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) is no longer a part of the EU's Structural Funds, which are designed to promote cohesion, regional development and employability. But the Structural Funds will continue to support rural development projects that complement the RDR's focus on land management.

### Case studies

#### **Cross-border food safety, INTERREG IIIA**

German and Dutch partners developed, with support from the cross-border INTERREG programme, a joint research and development project for an integrated cross-border quality label in the agri-food and cattle feed industries of the Rhein-Maas-Nord Euroregion<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>3</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/projects/stories/details.cfm?pay=DE&the=12&sto=862&lan=5](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/projects/stories/details.cfm?pay=DE&the=12&sto=862&lan=5)



## Greening Future Agriculture and Rural Development Programmes

Debate on how to green future programmes has already begun, in the run-up to the next round of discussions on how to make the CAP deliver more effectively the environmental objectives outlined in the EU's Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development.<sup>4</sup>

Key priorities will include:

- Incorporating objective criteria for fund distribution that make it a priority to improve the social and territorial cohesion of the EU and maintain our natural heritage. The different territories in the EU should meet the cost of this.
- Supporting a fairer and more evenly-balanced distribution of funds, giving incentives to farmers who generate social and environmental benefits and promoting jobs in agricultural activities that maintain and improve the environment.
- Ensuring coherence and balance among the subsidies that each producer can receive, so that aid encouraging environmental integration does not have to compete with larger amounts of aid that promote models that are environmentally less desirable.
- Providing sufficient agri-environmental aid and support for disadvantaged areas so they can maintain agricultural activity in areas where it is necessary, in order to meet EU commitments on conserving biodiversity and the environment.
- Sharing successful experiences that will encourage Member States to apply more widely decoupling, modulation and other ways of transferring funds from the first to the second pillar, as well as environmental integration.
- Increasing the percentage of mandatory modulation, including a progressive system and a maximum ceiling for aid per holding. All the recovered funds should be allocated to rural development.
- Effective ways of involving independent experts on the environment, as well as authorities responsible for environmental management and any interested social collectives. These partners need to be involved in the writing, implementation, control and evaluation of rural development programmes, as well as in their strategic environmental evaluation.
- Environmental audits by external evaluators or public units independent of the administrations responsible for programming and sector management.
- In areas designated under Natura 2000, management plans should be developed as a priority, including regulations or contracts that specify the statutory management requirements under EC regulations, relevant to conserving biodiversity in each location and adapted to local conditions.
- Following an EU-wide study, the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) should be revised to make their environmental benefit clear. This will prevent the inclusion of imprecise exception clauses that can be interpreted in various ways by the agricultural inspectors or management authorities. GAECs should also include verifiable criteria that farmers must meet which also give the inspectors a point of reference, helping them to decide whether the criteria are being met. This would make it possible to establish a standard control system.
- Cross-compliance needs to be better understood by farmers so they can comply with it. Knowing that the measures have environmental benefits will encourage farmers to comply with them, and gives them the satisfaction that they are helping to preserve the environment. The Member States must increase their efforts to disseminate adequate knowledge of the measures. Agricultural advice services should help farmers improve their knowledge and application of conditionality.
- Evaluation of projects' efficiency is only possible if projects have indicators that allow us to compare the results against the strategic objectives. The sanctions must be strict enough to dissuade any potential violators.
- The programme for the afforestation of agricultural land has been proven to be inefficient and ineffective. We recommend limiting the programme to exceptional situations where other instruments cannot be used and a significant environmental benefit is demonstrated. EU support for forestry should focus on developing balanced ecosystems that promote EU sustainable development objectives, including biodiversity.

<sup>4</sup>For more information see [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm)



## Where can I find out more?

More information is included in the GRDP report *Greening agricultural and rural development funds*. It is available on the CD-ROM in the toolkit and has links to key documents, references and further guidance.

See also the European Environment Report 2/2006 *Integration of environment into EU agriculture policy - the IRENA indicator-based assessment report*, available at [http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea\\_report\\_2006\\_2/en](http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea_report_2006_2/en)

It is also recommended to refer to Chapter 4.5 'Agriculture and Environment' of the report *The contribution of Structural and Cohesion Funds to a better environment*, European Network of Environmental Authorities (ENEA), European Commission, February, 2006. [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/pdf/preliminary\\_stocktaking.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/pdf/preliminary_stocktaking.pdf)

The European Court of Auditors published a very interesting report about the investment measures of the Rural Development Programme *European Court of Auditors, Special Report No 7/2006 concerning Rural Development Investments: Do they effectively address the problems of rural areas?* [http://eca.europa.eu/audit\\_reports/special\\_reports/docs/2006/rs07\\_06en.pdf](http://eca.europa.eu/audit_reports/special_reports/docs/2006/rs07_06en.pdf)



# Developing sustainable communities: greening towns and cities



## What are sustainable communities?

Eighty per cent of Europe's population live in urban areas, and it is our cities that make the most impact upon the environment. Pollution, congestion, over-consumption, waste, urban sprawl and social and economic degeneration remain challenges. However, cities are also the engines of social and economic change, the sources of the innovation essential for a sustainable future.

What happens in urban areas is vital to any vision of a sustainable future - and local decision-makers are key to any effective response in this respect. Greening towns and cities is now an achievable ambition: to turn our urban areas into communities where people live and work in harmony with their environment.

The overall aim of the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of life for present and future generations. This requires the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and tap the economy's potential for ecological and social innovation, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

The new regulatory framework for cohesion policy reinforces the importance of sustainable communities. This directs that support in towns and cities should focus on the development of participatory and integrated strategies capable of tackling the high concentration of economic, environmental and social problems that affect urban areas<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>For more information see <http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/default.aspx?m=2&i=345>  
<sup>2</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/urban/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/urban/index_en.htm) and  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/050706osc\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/050706osc_en.pdf)

### The Aalborg Commitments

*"In carrying out our responsibilities for local government and management, we are increasingly subject to the combined pressures of economic globalisation and technological development. We are confronted with fundamental economic change as well as man-made and natural threats to our communities and resources.*

*We face daunting challenges: creating employment in a knowledge-based economy, combating poverty and social exclusion, securing effective protection for our environment, reducing our ecological footprint, responding to demographic changes and managing cultural diversity, as well as averting conflict and sustaining peace in formerly war-torn communities.<sup>1</sup>"*

What are sustainable communities? They are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life.

## What are the benefits of greening towns and cities?

**Environmental regeneration as a driver of sustainable local economy:** Regeneration, renewal, renaissance, revitalisation, reinvigoration - the terms vary but the goal is the same: to restore and improve urban areas. This goal derives from a pervading awareness that our post-industrial cities have a spectrum of social, economic and environmental problems that require innovative and integrated solutions. The benefits of these programmes vary widely, including:

- encouraging new forms of economic activity when manufacturing has declined;
- re-connecting deprived neighbourhoods or social groups to the wider city;
- promoting the re-use of decayed inner urban areas, thus limiting suburban sprawl;
- improving alternative forms of transport to reduce congestion and pollution;
- restoring areas of historical or aesthetic significance.

**Integrated urban management:** Leading local authorities use integrated urban management to govern their communities. They do this by adopting long-term and strategic action plans that link together different sectors, administrative levels and obligations. Integrated urban management involves the people who live and work there, as well as public and private institutions. Cities need a long-term vision for dealing with the many factors critical to their success, including accessibility and mobility, access to services, the natural and physical environment, culture, SMEs, innovation, employability, social inclusion and public safety. A city must perform well in all these areas to generate growth and jobs. This requires an integrated approach across different fields with a clear long-term vision, action plan and finance. With key partners in near proximity, an integrated approach is the natural solution when designing urban regeneration or management projects.

### Case studies

#### Transforming Deptford Creek, UK

A decade ago, Deptford Creek was a rundown waterfront neighbourhood in south London. Investment in environmental regeneration, including improved flood defences and biodiversity, generated a pressure for development. As a result, developers have been able to attract investment in building new homes on many derelict sites, creative industries have flourished through reuse of industrial buildings and local communities have been able to absorb a substantial increase in their population. The numbers of both local businesses and jobs has doubled, 2,000 new homes have been built, a new railway line and two stations have opened. There is also a thriving street market.

Despite the population doubling since environmental regeneration, each resident has almost twice the previous amount of managed outdoor recreational space and each child has over twice the amount of outdoor learning space<sup>3</sup>.

#### Revitalising historic centres through public-private partnership, Gloucester Docks, UK

Gloucester Docks, England's most inland port, is today a vibrant mix of retail outlets, restaurants, bars and stylish waterfront apartments in refurbished historic grain and timber warehouses. Six years ago, the Docks were largely derelict, full of empty and dilapidated warehouses and old dockyards. Situated at the very centre of the city, the Docks were in an area that has, over the last 60 years, exhibited many symptoms of decline, deprivation and market failure and, despite its location in a generally prosperous area, has failed to benefit fully from recent economic growth.

The South West Regional Development Agency's purchase of the historic core of the Gloucester Docks area in 2001 has led to rapid redevelopment for residential, leisure and retail uses with substantial public realm and infrastructure upgrading, ensuring a thriving visitor attraction. This project has shown that old historic centres can attract high-end private sector investment and that the public sector can initiate wider buy-in by the private sector, for example by purchasing land<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>For more information see <http://www.creeksidecentre.org.uk/scheme.htm>

<sup>4</sup>For more information see [www.gloucesterurc.co.uk](http://www.gloucesterurc.co.uk)

## Case studies

**Ecological Map - high-tech integrated urban management, Spain**

The Urban Ecology Agency of Barcelona is a public consortium focusing on urban ecology. It has developed a model and is working with a multidisciplinary team of professionals including architects, engineers, economists, physicists and environmental scientists. The Agency's model centres on four closely related core areas: compactness, complexity, efficiency and social stability. These are also the historical features of the Mediterranean city, self-contained and diverse, in opposition to the extended city defined by urban sprawl and functional division.

This model can respond to both the dysfunctions of the city and the challenges of sustainability, and also promotes the incorporation of information and knowledge into society.

Bringing together a range of local authorities, the Agency is committed to a systemic approach that integrates economic development, ecological needs and urban quality. Sophisticated information tools such as this software make it possible to develop long-term policies that co-ordinate all facets of the urban environment. Local authorities in Barcelona regard an integrated plan based on sound knowledge of the urban system as a catalyst for sustainable growth.

An example of the Agency's model for the District of Gràcia is available at <http://www.mapaecologic.net>. An interactive urban map reveals, in a few clicks of a mouse, the dynamics of transport, noise and air pollution levels, congestion and land use of a given area<sup>5</sup>.



<sup>5</sup>For more information see <http://www.bcnecologia.net/>

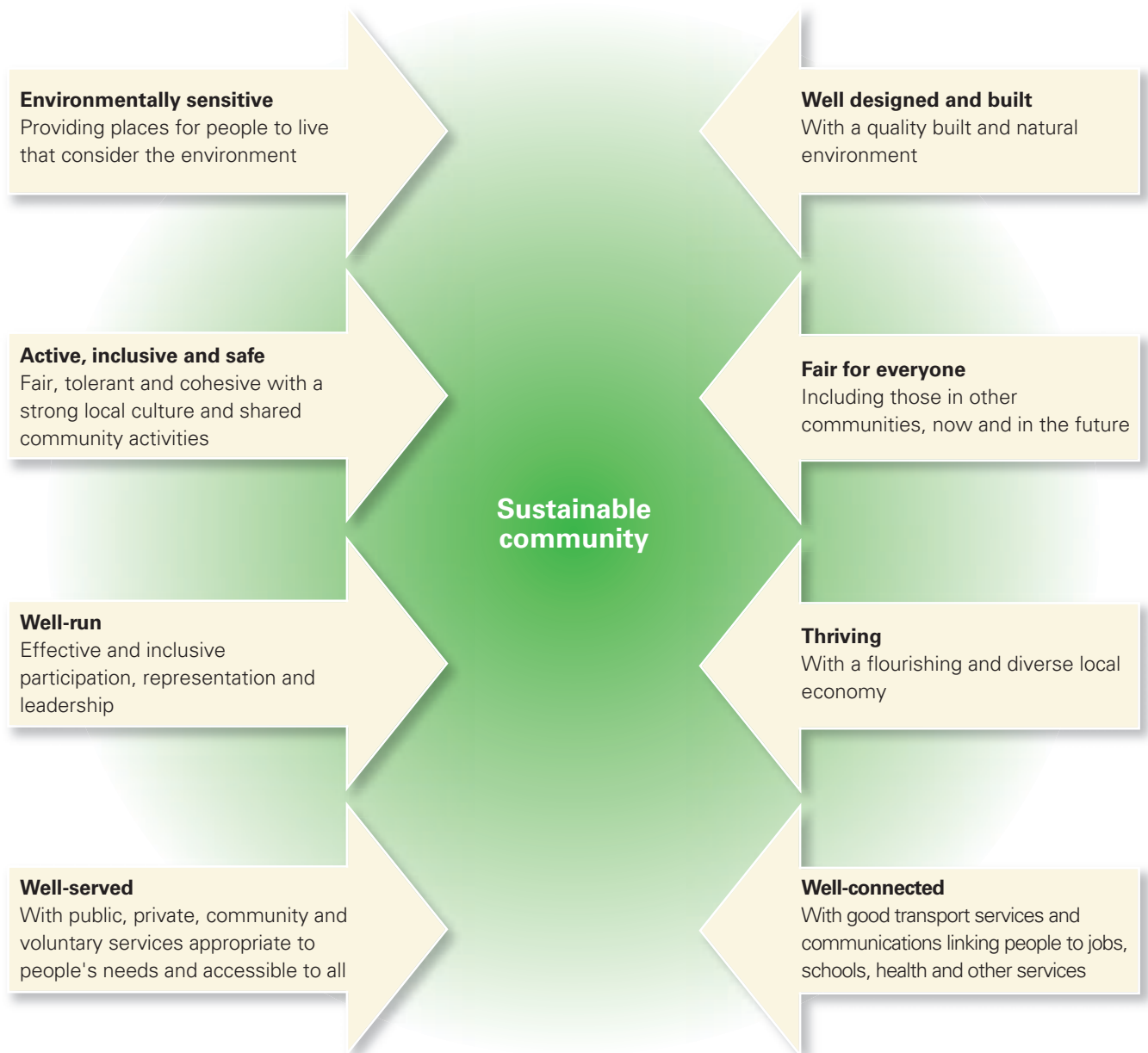


## A model of a sustainable community

The ‘sustainable communities’ concept recognises that cities, metropolitan areas and other territories, including rural areas, will best succeed when they integrate economic, social, environmental and physical factors, alongside public services, leadership and ‘quality of place’. In the UK, local strategic partnerships bring together public, private, voluntary and community interests, helping ensure that places are more sustainable and adaptable to change.

The model below shows the components of sustainable communities based on the UK approach<sup>6</sup>.

Leading local authorities use integrated urban management to govern their communities. They do this by adopting long-term and strategic action plans that link together different sectors, administrative levels and obligations. Using integrated urban management helps avoid conflicts between various sectors - and ultimately helps a community achieve a long-term vision for its own development.



<sup>6</sup>Based on <http://www.communities.gov.uk>

## Tips for becoming a sustainable community

- **Agree on a model for integrated management of the environment:** Develop a long-term strategic plan for your community's environment, taking into account local challenges and socio-economic aspirations. Carefully outline responsibilities for different levels of administration, set clear objectives and organise public consultation. A strategic plan gives a proper context to strategies on waste, water, transport, etc. and can make its partners more committed to its objectives.
- **Knowledge is the key:** An integrated plan must be based on a comprehensive knowledge of the local urban 'eco-system'. As in the Barcelona example, make full use of software recently developed to manage this type of data. Find out if local environmental agencies need to be better co-ordinated or funded to assist in monitoring the urban environment.
- **See environmental sustainability as a 'cross-cutting' theme:** All sectors are part of the urban ecology so they must pursue sustainability. Extend your integrated plan beyond environmental infrastructure such as water or waste management - for example, set targets for sustainable construction and sustainable procurement across all sectors.
- **Develop sustainable urban transport as a catalyst for change:** The challenges of urban transport lie at the heart of urban environmental management. Such are the synergies between transportation and congestion, pollution, land use, urban sprawl and even social cohesion that an integrated urban transport plan can lead to innovation across a range of sectors. A creative, community-based approach to transport can pave the way for wider change.
- **Work inside the local culture:** While environmental sustainability requires a culture-shift, a good strategy should not subvert a city's character. Look at European best practice, but use principles that are transferable rather than local applications. Very radical changes may not only be expensive and disruptive, but can also undermine the public confidence vital for sustainability. Identify the elements in local culture that can be the foundation for a sustainable urban environment.
- **Improve the role of environment agencies in urban areas:** An integrated approach to the urban environment may require institutional change. Are local environment agencies simply regulators of their own sector, or can they contribute to a holistic structure? Integration of the environment in all urban sectors requires expertise in planning as well as implementation. Environment agencies can provide this but need to be supported and developed.
- **Use the environment as a driver for wider renewal:** Urban renewal embraces society and economy as much as the environment. But the three are linked, and projects for environmental regeneration, as in the Deptford Creek example, can have powerful social and economic repercussions. In an integrated approach these agendas do not contradict each other
- **Win hearts and minds!** Remember that public participation and partnership with stakeholders is vital - incorporate it in your sustainable community concept.



## How can the European Union help?

The EU is not responsible for making decisions on local urban issues, but it is keen to support good urban policy on the environment and to facilitate the exchange of good practice across Europe.

The European Commission published its *Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment*<sup>7</sup> in January 2006. This outlines its objectives for integrated environmental management and sustainable transport, construction and urban planning. It offers guidance and help for local authorities pursuing these goals.

In *Cohesion Policy and cities: the urban contribution to growth and jobs in the regions*<sup>8</sup>, published in July 2006, the Commission suggested urban issues for regional programmes to focus on, including mobility, environment, innovation and governance. This opens up the possibility of Structural Funds being used to assist urban areas more than in the previous programming period.

There are also three new EU funding instruments<sup>9</sup> under the Cohesion Policy's funding for 2007-2013:

- **JESSICA: Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas** offers finance for urban renewal and development projects through a combination of grants and loans.
- **JEREMIE: Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises** seeks to improve access to finance for micro- to medium-sized enterprises. The objective is not only to enhance the economic competitiveness of smaller enterprises, but also to help them become more environmentally sustainable.

■ **JASPERS: Joint Assistance in Supporting Projects in European Regions** provides expertise and resources to authorities in regions targeted by the new Convergence Objective in 2007-2013. This assistance seeks to improve the quantity, quality and speed of major projects coming forward for approval.

Information for local authorities is available from different Directorates of the European Commission – the most relevant ones are listed below:

### **DG Environment:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/home\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/home_en.htm)  
Guidance for local authorities seeking to implement sustainable urban environment strategies.

### **DG Regional Policy:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/urban/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/urban/index_en.htm)

Information on the Cohesion Policy and cities: the urban contribution to growth and jobs in the regions.

### **DG Research:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index_en.htm)  
European Union Research website, with articles and news items detailing new research, including topics of interest to local urban authorities.

### **DG Energy and Transport:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/clean/index_en.htm)

The website looks at clean urban transport and features The Green Paper on Urban Transport, examples of actions and background facts.

<sup>7</sup>For more information see

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/thematic\\_strategy.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/thematic_strategy.htm)

<sup>8</sup>For more information see

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/urban/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/urban/index_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup>For more information see

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/funds/2007/jjj/background\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/2007/jjj/background_en.htm)

## Where can I find out more?

Below are additional websites with resources useful to local authorities. They represent important European and international networks of cities and regions engaged in integrating the environment into their policies.

### **European Urban Knowledge Network:**

[www.eukn.org](http://www.eukn.org)

EUKN brings together 15 Member States in sharing knowledge and case studies on tackling urban issues.

**ICLEI Europe** - Local Governments for Sustainability: [www.iclei-europe.org](http://www.iclei-europe.org)

Although an international network, ICLEI has a very healthy European representation. It brings together

local and regional authorities world-wide to share best practice and provide technical support.

### **UK Department for Communities and Local Government**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1122595>

UK Government website that includes the concept of sustainable communities.

**Urban Audit:** [www.urbanaudit.org](http://www.urbanaudit.org)

Urban Audit has statistics on over 258 European cities, allowing urban authorities to make comparisons in areas such as demography, society, economy and environment.



## The GRDP partnership is:



Agència d'Ecologia Urbana de Barcelona, España



Bundesministerium fuer Land und Fortwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft, Österreich (Austria)



Consejería de Turismo, Medio Ambiente y Política Territorial de La Rioja, España



Cornwall County Council, UK



Debreceni Egyetem Környezetgazdálkodási és Környezetpolitikai Központ Magyarország (Hungary)



Devon County Council, UK



Dipartimento Territorio e Ambiente – Autorita' Ambientale per i Fondi Strutturali, Regione Sicilia, Italia



Environment Agency for England and Wales, UK



Gestión Ambiental, Viveros y Repoblaciones de Navarra, España



Langhe Monferrato Roero Società Consortile a.r.l, Italia



Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Malta.



Med-O.R.O. Organizzazione per la Ricerca, l'Occupazione e lo Sviluppo nel Mediterraneo, Italia



Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare - Direzione Generale per la Ricerca ambientale e lo Sviluppo, Italia



Periferia Dytikis Ellados (Greece)



Servizio Ambiente e Paesaggio – Autorita' Ambientale - Regione Marche, Italia



The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe



Urząd Miejski Wrocławia, Polska (Poland)

## **The GRDP partnership works in association with:**

Agència de Desenvolupament Regional de Castilla y León, España

Autorità Regionale Ambientale Calabria, Italia

Autorità Ambientale della Regione Campania, Italia

Autorità Ambientale della Regione Piemonte, Italia

Bristol City Council, UK

Consellería de Medio Ambiente e Desenvolvemento Sostible, Xunta de Galicia, España

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Objective One Partnership Office, UK

Észak-Alföldi régió, Magyarország (Hungary)

Natural England, UK

**Ministerstwo Środowiska, Polska (Poland)**

**Министерство на регионалното развитие и благоустройството, България (Bulgaria)**

Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, España

Planning and Priorities Coordination Division, Office of the Prime Minister, Malta

Objective 2 Programme for the South West of England, UK

Sociedade Galega do Medio Ambiente, España

South West of England Regional Development Agency, UK

The Learning & Skills Council, UK

**Програма на ООН за развитие, България (Bulgaria)**

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## **Beyond compliance:** how regions can help build a sustainable Europe

### **A toolkit for integrating the environment into regional development**

The Greening Regional Development Programmes (GRDP) is an EU-wide network funded by the Interreg IIIC programme with 17 partners and more than 20 associated organisations. GRDP partners share good practice and develop advice on integrating the environment into regional development programmes.

For more information visit [www.grdp.org](http://www.grdp.org)