



## **WLGA Sustainable Development Framework**

### **We are not alone: European connections for local sustainability**

**Paper 1    EU strategy for sustainable development**

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# 1 The purpose of this paper : a European overview

The WLGA Sustainable Development Framework provides information and practical support for Welsh local authorities in the delivery of their responsibilities around sustainable development. Up to now the coverage of European policy and initiatives relevant for local sustainability has been limited.

There is no doubt that the European Union has a major impact on the lives of people in Wales, and in general ‘Wales plays a positive role within the EU as an active partner.’<sup>1</sup>

For local authorities the impact of EU legislation and the availability of funding – especially Structural Funds – are particularly important.

Since 2003 the WLGA European Office in Brussels has provided a dedicated resource for member authorities on European issues and promoted the role of Welsh local government in European affairs. Briefings relevant for work on local sustainability are prepared by the Brussels office staff; news items and partner searches are included in WLGA’s newsletter *Contact Europe Express* or posted on the website.

However practitioners in Wales :

- are not necessarily aware of the **EU’s longstanding commitment to sustainable development**, associated opportunities to influence policy and its significance for local action;
- may not be taking full advantage of the **extensive ‘European toolkit’** put in place to support local and regional authorities in delivering sustainability; and
- could probably do more to **identify and apply good practice** from outside the UK, to promote their own achievements, and generally to benchmark their own performance against some of the ‘most sustainable’ local authorities in Europe.

The SD Framework for 2012/13 provides an opportunity to take a more systematic look at the European context.

In the ‘logic’ of the EU system, funding and other support measures are always related to policy objectives. A good appreciation of the EU policy context should help Welsh local authorities to access EU funds and to raise their game by drawing on guidance and good practice lessons from across Europe.

This paper is the first of a series of briefings intended to provide those working on sustainable development in Wales with an overview of relevant EU policy and measures. It briefly describes the evolution of the EU’s strategy on sustainable development over the past 20 years (Section 2.1) and its relationship to the current overarching strategy Europe2020 (Section 2.2) – which is now the basis for planning all EU funding programmes and other measures available to support local and regional work on SD. Efforts to strengthen the local and regional dimensions of these strategies are outlined in Section 2.3. Section 3 comments on the relevance of this agenda for practice in Wales. Extracts on sustainable development from the EU

Treaties are in Annexe 1. Annexe 2 gives brief details of EU institutions and other organisations operating at EU level which are tied in to the EU sustainable development agenda and which local practitioners should be aware of.

Hyperlinks provide a way in to documentary and other sources. Detail on some specific measures to support local action follows in later papers.

## 2 Sustainable development at EU level

### 2.1 A potted history

European commitments to sustainable development are grounded in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Along with many national governments, the European Community signed **Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration**. The **5<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme** ‘Towards Sustainability’ published in 1993 reflected the Rio agreements and resulted in a raft of environmental legislation.

The legal basis for action at European level was secured by the **Amsterdam Treaty** which came into effect in 1999. This made sustainable development one of the core tasks of the European Community. Through the recent **Treaty of Lisbon**, sustainable development is now the guiding principle for EU policy. (Annexe 1)

The **Gothenburg Agenda** adopted in 2001 is usually recognised as the first step to an EU sustainable development strategy (EU SDS). It recorded the decision of the European Council (heads of government) to focus on four environmental challenges judged to have a European dimension, ‘adding an environmental dimension to the **Lisbon Strategy**’. However, it also introduced ‘a new approach to policy making’, including:

- an invitation to Member States to draw up national sustainable development strategies and to set up national processes for stakeholder consultation;
- formal review arrangements at EU level; and
- agreement that all major policy proposals at EU level should be subject to sustainability impact assessment.

The more comprehensive **renewed EU strategy for sustainable development** adopted in 2006 included guiding principles for sustainable development (such as the precautionary principle and ‘polluter pays’) and identified seven main challenges for action:

- climate change and clean energy;
- sustainable transport;
- public health;
- sustainable consumption and production;
- conservation and management of natural resources;
- social cohesion, demography and migration ; and
- global poverty and sustainable development.

Operational objectives, targets and a detailed set of actions to be undertaken by the EU institutions and Member States were adopted for each challenge. For national SDS a system of peer reviews was envisaged, with the Netherlands the first country to do this<sup>2</sup>.

Every two years, starting in 2007 :

- the Commission was to report progress on the SDS in the EU and Member States, making use of sustainable development indicators produced by Eurostat ; and
- Member States were to report their progress on both the EU SDS and national commitments, 'if appropriate, taking into account developments at sub-national level'.

However, these obligations were not legally binding. Most EU Member States have national SDS which they continue to implement and update but not all have monitored their performance against the challenges identified in the EU strategy.

The **2009 Review of the EU SDS** concluded that, 'unsustainable trends' were continuing. Particular efforts would be needed on climate change (especially adaptation), transport and biodiversity. Significantly for local government, the Review also said that there was a need for more attention to areas of activity in which local authorities are key actors, such as the promotion of cycling and walking and integration of transport and land use planning.

The 2009 Review coincided with the beginning of the financial crisis. It started a reflection on future ways to address sustainable development at EU level.

In 2010 the EU adopted a new overarching strategy – **Europe2020** – replacing both the Lisbon strategy and – in the European Commission's view – also the EU SDS.

Since then there have been differences of view at European level on the status of the EU SDS, with the Commission failing to maintain it and the other **EU institutions** putting pressure on the Commission to safeguard its position as a crucial over-arching policy framework.

In 2012 the Rio+20 summit brought renewed interest in international commitments to sustainable development. In its **Conclusions on Rio+20** adopted on 25th October the Environment Council breathed new life into the EU SDS. The Council reaffirmed :

‘...an undiminished resolve.... to an ambitious follow-up to Rio+20 and to set in motion actions and initiatives..... to... implement all the commitments ... at EU and Member State level, in particular through the ... EU SDS, which therefore should be reviewed as soon as possible, at the latest in 2014, taking into account the communication to be adopted by the Commission in the first quarter of 2013, as well as through the Europe 2020 strategy...’

The Commission's forthcoming Communication on the Rio+20 follow-up should clarify the status of the EU SDS but it is by no means certain that existing arrangements will continue. There are opportunities to express views to the

Commission via the public consultation ‘**Ensuring sustainable development globally: EU follow-up to Rio+20**’ launched on 16<sup>th</sup> October. On-line contributions are possible until 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

## 2.2 The EU SDS vs Europe 2020

**Europe2020** puts innovation and green growth at the heart of the EU’s strategy for competitiveness. With its priorities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and much improved economic governance it is expected to be more of a driver for change than the EU SDS. It sets five headline targets for the EU in 2020 which Member States have been required to translate into targets for their own countries. Progress towards the agreed national targets must be reported annually. Reports on **implementation in the UK** are already available.

### Europe 2020

#### TARGETS FOR THE EU

- 75% of 20-64 year-olds to be employed
- 3% of EU’s GDP to be invested in R&D/innovation
- greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than in 1990 (could be 30%)
- 20% of energy from renewable sources
- 20% increase in energy efficiency
- school drop-out rates to be reduced to below 10%
- at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds completing third level education
- at least 20million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Seven cross-cutting **Flagship Initiatives** – to be implemented by EU institutions and national authorities in cooperation - have been launched to help achieve the goals of the strategy.

#### FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES

##### Smart growth

- Digital agenda for Europe
- Innovation Union
- Youth on the Move

##### Sustainable Growth

- Resource-efficient Europe
- An industrial policy for the globalisation era

##### Inclusive growth

- An agenda for new skills and jobs
- European platform against poverty

The Flagship Initiative closest to the original Gothenburg Agenda is **Resource-efficient Europe**. With a major focus on achieving the shift towards a low carbon economy, this covers many of the issues which are currently a priority for Welsh local authorities, including climate change, energy and transport. **Documents listed as Key Proposals associated with this Flagship are essential places to look for forthcoming legislative proposals and support measures relevant for SD work here in Wales.**

Major questions have recently arisen about the relationship between the EU SDS - with its established but imperfect targets and review procedures - and the Europe 2020 strategy – covering most of the same ground - which now provides the context for all forward planning.

One of the reasons for the Commission's enthusiasm for the new strategy is the securing of targets and monitoring arrangements for Europe 2020 which are legally binding on the Member States. However, the other EU institutions are keen to retain the SDS, especially to ensure that the concept of operating within planetary limits – fundamental for sustainability - is not lost as the EU moves towards an approach based on 'green growth and ecological modernisation'.<sup>3</sup>

Further controversy has surrounded the Commission's delayed preparation of the 7th Environmental Action Programme (7th EAP), with the Resource Efficiency Flagship seen by the other institutions as inadequate to meet continuing environmental challenges<sup>4</sup>. The Commission's proposal, 'to guide environmental policy up to 2020' - **Living well, within the limits of our planet** - was published on 29th November. The stress on planetary limits is likely to be welcomed – and the international dimension is much stronger in this new programme than previously – but the resource efficiency agenda dominates and there is no mention of the EU SDS.

### **2.3 Recognising the importance of local efforts**

Although many measures developed within the framework of the **EU SDS** have been available to support local and regional delivery, the strategy itself has never had a very strong local or regional dimension. The focus has been on challenges judged to require a European approach and on EU and national efforts to tackle them. Reviews of progress have focused on the European level. There has been reliance on national governments to report progress on sustainable development in their countries – including sub-national actions – and to feed these into the EU monitoring process. Not all countries distinguish local efforts.

A recent **update from Germany** provides a good example of a national SD strategy which clearly spells out the role of each 'level' of government within a 'nested' system.

In the UK the approach now looks more 'parallel' than 'nested'.

## The EU SDS and the UK

The UK Government's 2005 SDS **Securing the Future** remains a useful reference document. This set out the objectives in the EU SDS and the UK's commitment to addressing them and identified the European policy initiatives, legislation, funding programmes and other measures relevant for action throughout the UK.

In conjunction with **Securing the Future**, the UK government and Devolved Administrations (DAs) published a shared framework for sustainable development. Entitled **One Future – different paths**, this covers some of the same challenges as the EU SDS but does not mention it specifically.

The UK has reported progress against the objectives in the EU SDS using national SD indicators designed to mesh with the Eurostat reporting requirements. It is not entirely clear how evidence from the DAs – including Wales – has been reflected. For the moment **Sustainable Development Indicators for Wales** are in line with the existing UK set and presumably feeding any 'onward reporting'.

The UK coalition government reportedly supports the continuing existence of an overarching EU framework for sustainable development. However, the current approach is said to be 'out of kilter' with that of other EU countries, the focus in the UK now being more on the 'mainstreaming' of SD, as happens under the **OECD system**. While committed to exchanging experience on SD with European partners, the UK government's 2011 statement **Mainstreaming sustainable development** makes no reference to the EU SDS.

The Rio+20 conference has resulted in much stronger recognition of local and regional efforts in the delivery of international agreements. At the summit it was clear that practical progress towards sustainability at local level – and especially in cities – has generally surpassed national efforts.

At Rio+20 one of the EU delegation's declared aims was 'to ensure that commitments are taken worldwide at the level closest to citizens – in towns, cities and regions'. The **Committee of the Regions signed a memorandum of Understanding with UNEP** on sustainable cities and regions, making commitments to multi-level environmental governance, green economy and resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystems management and decentralised cooperation for development.

At its meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012 the Environment Council commented that '...the agreed outcome document from Rio **'The Future We Want'** ... constitutes a sound basis for further work in the ongoing quest for sustainable development, globally, regionally, nationally and locally' and reaffirmed 'support for an open and inclusive follow-up process allowing the full and active participation of all major groups and stakeholders' including 'strong involvement' of local authorities. 'Meaningful involvement' of local authorities – along with 'all parts of civil society and national



and sub-national authorities' is also called for in relation to the improved Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD).

For **Europe 2020** it should prove more straightforward to ensure an explicit local and regional dimension, mainly because of :

- the inclusion of a new objective for territorial cohesion in the EU Lisbon Treaty and the adoption by national governments and the European Commission of the **Territorial Agenda 2020** with its focus on place-based policy making and delivery ; and
- general acceptance at EU level of the concept of multi-level governance in which the role of regional and local authorities is well recognised.

For the Committee of the Regions, 'joined-up multi-level governance is a pre-requisite for the success of Europe 2020'. Having previously called for the adoption of local strategies for SD, the COR is now encouraging all regions and local authorities to develop their own 'Europe 2020 vision'.

In 2010 the COR launched its **Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform** as a way to demonstrate local and regional contributions to the delivery of the agreed European objectives and to enable participating organisations to report on and compare their progress. The Platform is also a way to feed local and regional views into the EU decision-making processes and a useful channel for exchange of experience. More than 160 local and regional authorities are members of the Platform. The COR's **Handbook for Local and Regional Authorities: Delivering on the Europe 2020 Strategy** is a useful source.

#### **Welsh connections**

In 2010-12 Christine Chapman AM was one of the two political coordinators of the Europe2020 Monitoring platform.

There has been no participation from the Welsh Government or Welsh local authorities up to now. However, the Welsh Government must in any case report its contribution to the achievement of the UK's Europe 2020 targets for inclusion in the **National Reform Programme**.

#### **Good practice example**

The INTERREG IVC project **EU2020 Going Local**, led from Sweden and with two UK partners, has focused on regional level implementation of EU2020, looking in particular at measures for energy and sustainable transport.

Recognising the need to find practical ways to secure local and regional participation in the implementation of EU strategic goals in a more reliable way than has occurred in relation to the EU SDS, the COR has proposed the use of **Territorial Pacts** for Europe 2020.

### **A Territorial Pact for Europe 2020**

A Territorial Pact for Europe 2020 is an agreement between a country's tiers of government (local, regional, national) in which parties signing up to the Pact make a commitment to coordinate their policy agendas so as to focus their actions and financial resources on the EU2020 targets.

Within a particular country Territorial Pacts could be set up to implement one or several of the Flagship Initiatives.

The Territorial Pact could provide the basis for local authority involvement in shaping and spending Structural Funds resources, and in particular for global grants.

Voluntary sustainability pacts – similar in concept to the Territorial Pacts now being promoted but lacking the link to EU funding – were piloted by 25 European cities and 17 regions in 2002-3 through a Eurocities project. The aim was to create agreements between the European Commission, Member States and other government levels to improve implementation of existing European policies contributing to sustainable development. Eurocities' priorities for 2012 include continuing 'to engage with the EU in the development of innovative processes, tools and instruments.... to enhance governance in Europe, such as.... territorial pacts'.

The EU's Economic and Social Committee is also actively promoting engagement by local stakeholders in Europe 2020. A series of '**going local events**' has recently been held.

In relation to environmental issues, there is much support at EU level for further measures to enable a greater contribution from local and regional authorities in the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP. An emphasis on practical measures to improve implementation (especially compliance with EU legislation) is expected. Some of the new proposals – and in particular the focus on land as a scarce resource – are likely to have major implications for spatial planning and the management of development by local authorities.

### 3 Getting to grips with this agenda – why it matters for Wales

As a region of an EU Member State, Wales already operates within the broad legal framework established in the EU Treaty. Sustainable development is a longstanding shared objective, applying to all countries and regions of the EU, even if they have not chosen to enact their own legislation on the subject.

The ‘European approach’ to SD has since the 1990s been driven by the intention to make sustainable development an underlying principle in all areas of EU activity. In line with the approach recommended in Agenda 21, all tiers of government have been encouraged to establish integrated strategies for sustainable development containing long term objectives with measurable targets.

Recognising that joined-up thinking in policy-making is not sufficient to achieve concrete outcomes, the EU institutions have also promoted ‘full use of the right tools’, especially routine use of sustainability impact assessment and much smarter use of measures to influence the market such as public procurement, tradable permits and removal of harmful subsidies. This approach broadly continues.

Local and regional authorities wishing to access EU funds generally have to demonstrate that they have an integrated local strategy in place<sup>5</sup>.

The EU Treaty obligations and the existence of the EU SDS have enabled massive Structural Funds and other EU spending on the SD agenda, especially on environmental and social initiatives. Those dealing with Structural Funds in Wales generally appreciate this. However, knowledge of other EU measures useful for local delivery tends to be patchy. A steer from the Welsh Government as to which EU initiatives are seen as helpful in securing local action for SD could make a great deal of difference.

Although many **Welsh local authorities** were very involved in Local Agenda 21, few have recently gone beyond statutory requirements for strategy preparation to adopt comprehensive sustainability programmes making use of the whole ‘toolkit’.

Ideally, local authorities interested in securing EU funds – and taking part in other EU initiatives around SD – now need to be able to demonstrate how local activities relate to Europe 2020.

An alternative to production of local strategies for SD could be adoption of local Europe 2020 ‘visions’, as promoted by the COR. These could be useful preparation for accessing future Structural Funds resources

The **Welsh Government** could probably do more to enable local authorities to understand how the EU commitments and provisions of the EU SDS relate to policy priorities in Wales. Other EU regions typically do this through a sustainable development strategy.

Both **One Wales, One Planet** and the Welsh Government’s recent White Paper **A Sustainable Wales: Better Choices for a Better Future** briefly acknowledge the

relevance of the EU framework but place more emphasis on Wales playing its part internationally than in delivering shared European commitments.

- The Welsh Government's **Sustainable Development Annual Reports for 2010-11** and **2011-12** mention the use of some European measures to support local action – principally Structural Funds – but do not refer to the EU SDS.
- In some areas of activity judged problematic in the SD Annual Reports (for example the difficulty of achieving modal shift from private cars to cycling and walking) there are EU support measures which could be brought into play.

Once the SD legislation is in place the Welsh Government could consider an awareness-raising review of all EU instruments relevant for SD implementation here in Wales, for example to inform the preparation of guidance for implementation of the new SD duty.

The Welsh Government could also consider strengthening or 're-connecting' to some of the processes associated with the EU SDS. For example, they might:

- include a section on Wales's contribution to tackling EU priority challenges in future annual reports measuring progress against the SD Scheme (or whatever replaces it);
- aim for greater consistency between material presented in the SD Annual Reports and the detailed evidence on many of the same measures included in the sections about Wales in the **UK's National Reform Programme**.
- include measures aligned with the EU reporting requirements in the new set of SD Indicators for Wales (foreseen for next year) and make sure that indicators used by local authorities to monitor their SD progress are aligned with the European framework;
- establish a system for routine use of sustainability impact assessment in the allocation of public funds;
- require the new SD body to engage with ESDN or EEAC (see Annexe 2), depending on its eventual function; and
- arrange for peer review of the Welsh Government's approach to SD (something not undertaken for the UK SDS which in the past was subject to an internal review process). This could possibly be undertaken through the **Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development** (which itself came into being as a result of funding from the Structural Funds' **Innovative Actions** budget available in 2002-6, in turn made possible by the existence of the EU SDS).

The extent to which these actions are useful will to some extent depend upon the fate of the EU SDS itself.

Given the importance of the sustainable development agenda for Wales it seems appropriate to take an active interest in current debates around the future of the EU strategy and its relationship to Europe 2020.

- Continuation of the SDS could be important for securing future resources for a 'greener' agenda – for example for further work to reduce the ecological footprint of Wales.
- It seems likely that the planned review of the EU SDS in 2014 will have an explicit local and regional dimension. This creates an opportunity for both the Welsh Government and Welsh local authorities to demonstrate the effectiveness of our arrangements to deliver on SD objectives and to influence the design of future instruments.

New opportunities to secure support for regional and local action are likely to be provided by the renewed connection to Rio processes and the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP.

Wales has representatives in the EU institutions currently working on these issues. Local practitioners have much to gain by supporting their activities and making full use of their expertise.

## Annexe 1 Sustainable development in the EU Treaties

The **Amsterdam Treaty** which came into effect in 1999 made sustainable development one of the core tasks of the European Community, stating (in Article 2) that ‘the Union shall set itself the following objectives.... to promote economic and social progress and a high level of employment and to achieve balanced and sustainable development...’

An important means to promote sustainable development was the additional Treaty provision (in Article 6) for environmental protection requirements to be integrated into the definition and implementation of other policies.

### Welsh connections

At their meeting in Cardiff in June 1998, the European Council called for other Council ‘configurations’ to establish strategies for integrating the environment and sustainable development into their respective policy fields. Applying initially to the Councils for energy, transport and agriculture, the so-called **Cardiff Process** was applied to most policy areas including industry, the internal market, cohesion and economic and financial affairs. Shortcomings in implementation are considered to have undermined this process, now quietly discontinued. However, practical tools for use ‘below’ the EU level - such as the Directive for Strategic Environmental Assessment - are now well established and used routinely, including of course in Wales.

The **Treaty of Lisbon**, which came into force in December 2009, makes sustainable development the guiding principle for EU policy.

**Article 3** states that ‘The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.

It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States. It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.’

**Article 5** states that ‘In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of

human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.’

The inclusion of sustainable development as an objective in the EU Treaty has had a major impact on the work of the EU institutions; officially it is ‘mainstreamed’ into all policy areas and programmes. However, as in Wales, the degree to which this legal obligation produces results ‘on the ground’ is a matter for debate. **Success depends upon the effective deployment of a range of measures grounded in the Treaty commitments.**

## Annexe 2 Getting involved – key organisations at EU level

Work on the EU strategy for sustainable development has been driven mainly by the European Commission and the European Council. However, several of the other **EU institutions** have formal arrangements to influence and respond to the EU SDS.

Most relevant for Welsh local authorities are :

- The **Committee of the Regions (COR)**, the main forum for liaison with sub-national and local government. According to its mission statement, the COR works ‘to secure harmonious and sustainable development across all European territorial areas’. COR has long been in favour of local and regional authorities defining their own SD strategies in line with the strategic objectives set at national and European levels. The COR’s Commission (committee) on Territorial Cohesion (COTER) deals with the local sustainability agenda under the general heading of ‘sustainable cities’.
- The Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which established its **Sustainable Development Observatory** in 2006 following the adoption of the Renewed EU SDS. The Observatory has pulled together links to **best practice databases** on a range of topics including Local Sustainability.
- The **European Parliament**, with its cross-party **Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development**. A seminar on ‘Supporting cities for sustainable solutions’ in 2010, and more recently a joint meeting with the Urban Intergroup on green infrastructure in urban areas, signal a growing interest in actions in cities.

### Welsh connections

Councillor Bob Bright, Leader of Newport City Council, represents Wales on the Committee of the Regions’s COTER Commission.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM serves on the COR Commission for Natural Resources (NAT). There are currently no members from Wales on the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE) Commission.

Wales sends three representatives to the Economic and Social Committee, including Brian Curtis who serves on the ‘TEN’ Section (which deals with Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society) and Tom Jones (WCVA vice president) who is a member of the NAT Section (Agriculture, Rural development and Environment).

Jill Evans MEP serves on the Committee on Environment, Public health and Food Safety. None of Wales’s four MEPs is currently a member of the cross-party Intergroup ‘Climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development’ but they should be aware of its activities.



Besides the EU institutions, two networking organisations have had a semi-formal role in implementation of the EU SDS.

- The **European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)**, dating from 2002, is an informal network whose members are mostly civil servants from national ministries responsible for their national SD strategies, so for the UK the main contacts are with Defra. Although not entirely up to date the ESDN website provides a history and links to many useful sources including EU documents and national SD strategies.
- The network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (**EEAC**) brings together national advisory bodies on sustainable development such as the former UK Sustainable Development Commission. Working groups and events cover many topics of interest to local authorities, including in 2012 the green economy and sustainable mobility.

In addition – and very accessible for local authorities – several local government networks with a sustainable development agenda operate at European level or at a broader international scale. Most significant are the **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**, **Eurocities** and **ICLEI**. They seek to influence EU policy developments on behalf of their members and lobby for local authorities to be properly supported in their efforts to manage their local areas in more sustainable ways.

### **Welsh connections**

The ESDN website reports arrangements for sustainable development in EU member countries, including ‘sub-national’ measures relevant for local government. The section on the UK includes a description of actions in Wales and it is possible to make comparisons with progress in other parts of the UK as well as in other European regions. Efforts need to be made to keep this information updated. Note that in many European countries Local Agenda 21 is still very much alive, in contrast to the situation here.

Through its new Chief Executive, Cynnal Cymru has recently become an associated partner of ESDN.

CCW is an EEAC partner.

WLGA is a member of CEMR. No individual authorities in Wales are currently members of Eurocities or ICLEI.

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<sup>1</sup> *Wales and the European Union : the Welsh Government's EU strategy*. May 2012 p. 7

<sup>2</sup> For some examples see *Good practices in the national sustainable development strategies of OECD countries*, OECD 2006 <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/36655769.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ecorys Research & Consulting (2008) *Progress on EU Sustainable Development Strategy: Final report* Ecorys Nederland BV, Rotterdam.

<sup>4</sup> See for example the Opinion adopted by the Economic and Social Committee in April 2012. <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.22840>

<sup>5</sup> There is more about this in Paper 2