Highlights and conclusions of the EESC Conference held on 7-8 February 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speakers at the conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conference message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The president’s conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The European Economic and Social Committee and its Sustainable Development Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>For more information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The 1992 United Nations World Summit, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, laid the foundations for global policies on sustainable development and the environment. Twenty years later, the UN is organising a high-level conference on sustainable development which will take place in Rio on 20-22 June 2012, and focus on the green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development. With a significant proportion of the world’s population living in poverty, increasing environmental degradation and the over-consumption of natural resources, we are still far from living in a sustainable world.

Equally, the current economic and financial crisis is making people realise that the existing economic models are not working properly anymore. We need to make Rio+20 a turning point for global sustainable development – a decisive step towards eliminating poverty and social injustice whilst preserving natural resources for our future generations.

Engaging people for a sustainable Europe lies at the heart of my work programme as EESC President, which is why the preparations for the Rio+20 conference are high up on our political agenda. At European level, following the organisation of two major hearings, the EESC adopted an opinion in September 2011 which set out European civil society’s contribution to the EU’s position at Rio+20. At international level, meanwhile, we are discussing Rio-related topics with our counterparts in various parts of the world including Brazil, China, Russia, India, South Africa (BRICS) and the ACP region.

In February, the EESC conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20, offered a unique opportunity to hear the voices of European civil society in the run-up to the UN summit. With nearly 300 participants, high-level speakers, lively debates and plenty of media interest, it fully reflected the importance of sustainable development on the EESC agenda.

It also sent out a strong joint message from Europe’s civil society organisations to EU and world leaders about the changes that Rio+20 needs to set in motion. We all agree that we want our governments to be more ambitious in terms of objectives, timing, funding, legal commitments and follow-up to ensure that the Rio+20 conference provides an outcome which helps address the global challenges we are facing.

We believe that greening the global economy is the way forward for reconciling the needs of a growing world population with our planet’s limited natural resources. It provides opportunities for new jobs and economic growth, which can help the global recovery. But going sustainable also means changing the way we behave in Europe, and developing a new respect for those finite resources. Whatever measures our leaders agree on, they must prioritise the social aspects of sustainable development: combating poverty and hunger, offering decent working conditions, and promoting the interests of women, migrants and disadvantaged people.

The conference message is printed in full in chapter two. Endorsed in an EESC opinion adopted on 22 February 2012, it represents European civil society’s formal contribution to the EU’s position in the Rio+20 negotiations. We will share and discuss these ideas with our civil society counterparts in the BRICS countries prior to the conference in order to outline a joint message from global civil society to Rio+20.

The lively debates at the plenary and during the workshop sessions produced further conclusions and recommendations, which are summarised in chapter three. At the end of this brochure you will find general information about the EESC and its Sustainable Development Observatory, as well as sources of further information.

During both the run-up to Rio+20, and beyond, civil society the world over must continue to push for an outcome that can truly address the challenges that our planet is facing. Without this pressure, there is a real risk that world leaders will lack the courage to take the tough decisions needed for the future. If we all mobilise together, I am certain that we can make our planet Earth viable for future generations.
Introduction

The 1992 United Nations World Summit, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, laid the foundations for global policies on sustainable development and the environment. Twenty years later, the UN is organising a high-level conference on sustainable development which will take place in Rio on 20-22 June 2012, and focus on the green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development. With a significant proportion of the world’s population living in poverty, increasing environmental degradation and the over-consumption of natural resources, we are still far from living in a sustainable world.

Equally, the current economic and financial crisis is making people realise that the existing economic models are not working properly anymore. We need to make Rio+20 a turning point for global sustainable development – a decisive step towards eliminating poverty and social injustice whilst preserving natural resources for our future generations.

Engaging people for a sustainable Europe lies at the heart of my work programme as EESC President, which is why the preparations for the Rio+20 conference are high up on our political agenda. At European level, following the organisation of two major hearings, the EESC adopted an opinion in September 2011 which set out European civil society’s contribution to the EU’s position at Rio+20. At international level, meanwhile, we are discussing Rio-related topics with our counterparts in various parts of the world including Brazil, China, Russia, India, South Africa (BRICS) and theACP region.

In February, the EESC conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20, offered a unique opportunity to hear the voices of European civil society in the run-up to the UN summit. With nearly 300 participants, high-level speakers, lively debates and plenty of media interest, it fully reflected the importance of sustainable development on the EESC agenda.

It also sent out a strong joint message from Europe’s civil society organisations to EU and world leaders about the changes that Rio+20 needs to set in motion. We all agree that we want our governments to be more ambitious in terms of objectives, timing, funding, legal commitments and follow-up to ensure that the Rio+20 conference provides an outcome which helps address the global challenges we are facing.

We believe that greening the global economy is the way forward for reconciling the needs of a growing world population with our planet’s limited natural resources. It provides opportunities for new jobs and economic growth, which can help the global recovery. But going sustainable also means changing the way we behave in Europe, and developing a new respect for those finite resources. Whatever measures our leaders agree on, they must prioritise the social aspects of sustainable development – combating poverty and hunger, offering decent working conditions and promoting the interests of women, migrants and disadvantaged people.

The conference message is printed in full in chapter two. Endorsed in an EESC opinion adopted on 22 February 2012, it represents European civil society’s formal contribution to the EU’s position in the Rio+20 negotiations. We will share and discuss all these ideas with our civil society counterparts in the BRICS countries prior to the conference in order to outline a joint message from global civil society to Rio+20.

The lively debates at the plenary and during the workshop sessions produced further conclusions and recommendations, which are summarised in chapter three. At the end of this brochure you will find general information about the EESC and its Sustainable Development Observatory, as well as sources of further information.

During both the run-up to Rio+20, and beyond, civil society must continue to push for an outcome that can truly address the challenges that our planet is facing. Without this pressure, there is a real risk that world leaders will lack the courage to take the tough decisions needed for the future. If we all mobilise together, I am certain that we can make our planet Earth viable for future generations.
During the conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20 organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on 7–8 February 2012 in Brussels, we, representatives of European organised civil society, adopted the following message. We:

1. demand that, at the Rio+20 UN Conference, world leaders commit to a concrete action plan leading to sustainable development and poverty eradication within the limitations of the planet. Promoting a green economy must be part of an overarching sustainable development strategy, striking a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while achieving distributional and intergenerational equity.

2. stress that eradicating poverty and secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for all must be a top priority on the Rio+20 agenda. We point out that the promotion of environmentally sound local agriculture in developing countries plays a crucial role in fighting poverty and improving food security, and is a driving force for the development of economically prosperous rural areas. We stress the need to ensure equal political, economic and social rights for women.

3. call on political leaders to deliver on their commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to adopt additional measures ensuring the necessary effective financing.

4. urge European negotiators to place much greater emphasis on the social dimension of sustainable development than envisaged in the zero draft. Increasing social and wealth inequalities within and between countries requires urgent action, since they are hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development and distributional equity. Moreover, a just transition must guarantee decent work and high-quality jobs for the workforce. We call for the ratification and application of ILO Core Labour Standards and we fully support the ILO Social Protection Floor Initiative.

5. call on political leaders at Rio to commit to a green economy roadmap with clear goals and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring an economically efficient, socially just and environmentally sound transition to sustainable societies. We stress that the transition process must be based on continuous engagement with civil society, including social dialogue.

6. urge European countries and other developed countries to commit in Rio to substantially reducing their consumption of the earth’s limited natural resources. We urge European leaders to implement agreed EU targets, and to prepare themselves for more ambitious action. We encourage emerging countries to use natural resources more efficiently.

7. call for effective measures to phase out unsustainable consumption and production patterns, using a broad range of policy instruments, including regulatory measures, fiscal policy tools, green and social public procurement, the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies, research on eco-innovation, the internalisation of environmental costs and other market-based incentives, while at the same time promoting sustainable lifestyles and the active involvement of consumers in the transition. We call for the adoption of a 10-year work programme on sustainable consumption and production in Rio.
Conference message

During the conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20 organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on 7–8 February 2012 in Brussels, we, representatives of European organised civil society, adopted the following message. We:

1. demand that, at the Rio+20 UN Conference, world leaders commit to a concrete action plan leading to sustainable development and poverty eradication within the limitations of the planet. Promoting a green economy must be part of an overarching sustainable development strategy, striking a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while achieving distributional and intergenerational equity.

2. stress that eradicating poverty and secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for all must be a top priority on the Rio+20 agenda. We point out that the promotion of environmentally sound local agriculture in developing countries plays a crucial role in fighting poverty and improving food security, and is a driving force for the development of economically prosperous rural areas. We stress the need to ensure equal political, economic and social rights for women.

3. call on political leaders to deliver on their commitment to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to adopt additional measures ensuring the necessary effective financing.

4. urge European negotiators to place much greater emphasis on the social dimension of sustainable development than envisaged in the zero draft. Increasing social and wealth inequalities within and between countries requires urgent action, since they are hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development and distributional equity. Moreover, a just transition must guarantee decent work and high-quality jobs for the workforce. We call for the ratification and application of ILO Core Labour Standards and we fully support the ILO Social Protection Floor Initiative.

5. call on political leaders at Rio to commit to a green economy roadmap with clear goals and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring an economically efficient, socially just and environmentally sound transition to sustainable societies. We stress that the transition process must be based on continuous engagement with civil society, including social dialogue.

6. urge European countries and other developed countries to commit in Rio to substantially reducing their consumption of the earth’s limited natural resources. We call on European leaders to implement agreed EU targets, and to prepare themselves for more ambitious action. We encourage emerging countries to use natural resources more efficiently.

7. call for effective measures to phase out unsustainable consumption and production patterns, using a broad range of policy instruments, including regulatory measures, fiscal policy tools, green and social public procurement, the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies, research on eco-innovation, the internalisation of environmental costs and other market-based incentives, while at the same time promoting sustainable lifestyles and the active involvement of consumers in the transition. We call for the adoption of a 10-year work programme on sustainable consumption and production in Rio.

In particular, we urge developed countries to effectively implement their commitment to allocate at least 0.7% of their gross national income to development aid.

“Whatever the outcome of Rio+20, it will have a huge impact on future generations. That is why the EU intends to take a leadership role.”

Janez Potočnik
European Environment Commissioner

“We need to make Rio+20 a turning point. We should not lose momentum, but we should try to stay optimistic.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“It’s about how to provide for the next generation’s ability to enjoy life in future.”

Andris Piebalgs
European Development Commissioner

“It’s about how to provide for the next generation’s ability to enjoy life in future.”

Andris Piebalgs
European Development Commissioner
8. appreciate that the zero draft recognises the limitations of GDP as a means of measuring well-being and call for the involvement of civil society in the urgent development of complementary indicators.

9. welcome the initiative to establish by 2015 a set of global Sustainable Development Goals, taking a balanced approach to all three dimensions of sustainable development. We call for an inclusive process starting in Rio linking MDGs with comprehensive SDGs and establishing a strategy and sustainable development indicators with clear mechanisms for accountability.

10. advocate a new global deal in Rio to ensure the necessary investments in the greening of the economy.

11. acknowledge the key role and the responsibility of the private sector in achieving a transition to sustainable development and stress that greening the economy is an opportunity for business. We encourage business and industry to take that opportunity, and call on political leaders to draw up clear, stable and predictable green economy policy frameworks to give business the confidence, the regulatory framework and the incentives for the investments needed.

12. call for the creation of a new Council for Sustainable Development, replacing the Commission for Sustainable Development, and for the creation of a new UN agency for the environment based on UNEP. Both of these bodies should provide for effective involvement of civil society, as represented by the Major Groups.

13. welcome the proposal to establish an ombudsman for future generations.

14. urge political leaders to agree at the Rio+20 conference on additional measures to improve effective civil society involvement and achieve empowerment at global, national and local level in the transition to sustainable societies. We call for the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks ensuring public access to information, dialogue, democratic participation and scrutiny. We advocate promoting multi-stakeholder fora such as Economic and Social Committees and National Sustainability Councils as models to stimulate civil society debate. We call for more awareness-raising campaigns and education programmes on sustainable development.

15. encourage civil society all over the world to continue pushing for a conference outcome capable of meeting the challenges we are facing. Civil society has to take global responsibility!

16. welcome the zero draft document issued by the UN Rio+20 Conference Bureau as a good starting point for subsequent negotiations. However, we feel that the zero draft still falls far short of these challenges.

17. expect European heads of government to take responsibility and engage in the Rio+20 conference. We call on EU negotiators to work for a more ambitious document as regards targets, timing, financing, legal commitment and follow-up, and stress the need to review and revitalise the overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy following the Rio+20 conference.
appreciate that the zero draft recognises the limitations of GDP as a means of measuring well-being and call for the involvement of civil society in the urgent development of complementary indicators.

welcome the initiative to establish by 2015 a set of global Sustainable Development Goals, taking a balanced approach to all three dimensions of sustainable development. We call for an inclusive process starting in Rio linking MDGs with comprehensive SDGs and establishing a strategy and sustainable development indicators with clear mechanisms for accountability.

advocate a new global deal in Rio to ensure the necessary investments in the greening of the economy.

acknowledge the key role and the responsibility of the private sector in achieving a transition to sustainable development and stress that greening the economy is an opportunity for business. We encourage business and industry to take that opportunity, and call on political leaders to draw up clear, stable and predictable green economy policy frameworks to give business the confidence, the regulatory framework and the incentives for the investments needed.

call for the creation of a new Council for Sustainable Development, replacing the Commission for Sustainable Development, and for the creation of a new UN agency for the environment based on UNEP. Both of these bodies should provide for effective involvement of civil society, as represented by the Major Groups.

welcome the proposal to establish an ombudsman for future generations.

urge political leaders to agree at the Rio+20 conference on additional measures to improve effective civil society involvement and achieve empowerment at global, national and local level in the transition to sustainable societies. We call for the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks ensuring public access to information, dialogue, democratic participation and scrutiny. We advocate promoting multi-stakeholder fora such as Economic and Social Committees and National Sustainability Councils as models to stimulate civil society debate. We call for more awareness-raising campaigns and education programmes on sustainable development.

encourage civil society all over the world to continue pushing for a conference outcome capable of meeting the challenges we are facing. Civil society has to take global responsibility!

welcome the zero draft document issued by the UN Rio+20 Conference Bureau as a good starting point for subsequent negotiations. However, we feel that the zero draft still falls far short of these challenges.

expect European heads of government to take responsibility and engage in the Rio+20 conference. We call on EU negotiators to work for a more ambitious document as regards targets, timing, financing, legal commitment and follow-up, and stress the need to review and revitalise the overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy following the Rio+20 conference.
The president's conclusions

With 30 influential speakers, including top-level decision-makers from the United Nations Secretariat, the European Commission and the European Parliament, plus lively debates with civil society representatives and experts, it was no surprise that Go sustainable, be responsible! provided plenty to think about. The conference message (see chapter two) summarised the most important conclusions. The general debates, and in particular the four workshops, provided the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion and led to more detailed policy recommendations which are outlined below.

1. Shifting towards sustainable development

Sustainable development was at the centre of the two general debates during the conference.

At present, the global economy is not working towards sustainable development: 1 billion human beings suffer from hunger in various parts of the world, and particularly in developing countries – a situation wholly at odds with the aim of the first Millennium Development Goal: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Increasing social and wealth inequalities within and between countries are hindering progress towards sustainable development and distributional equity. On the environmental side, current economic policies and put their people and the planet at the centre of their policy-making.

Moreover, the concept of sustainable development, as established by the UN summits in Rio in 1992 and in Johannesburg in 2002, represents more than just the green economy; and it is that concept that needs to be strengthened at Rio+20. Promoting a green economy has to be part of an overarching sustainable development strategy, striking a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while achieving distributional and intergenerational equity. Rio+20 should foster sustainable development through a series of actions. The most important – as outlined in the conference message – are agreement by world leaders on a concrete action plan for sustainable development and tools for continuous progress and implementation, such as Sustainable Development Goals, and the establishment of indicators for measuring economic and social progress and improving human welfare and quality of life, and preserving the natural environment.

In my view, the report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, and in particular its 56 recommendations, is a highly valuable source of inspiration for policies on sustainable development and should be taken into account by the negotiating parties.

It became very clear from the debates that the social dimension of sustainable development needs much more attention than envisaged in the zero draft. The UN (ILO) Social Protection Floor Initiative, establishing a set of social rights, services and facilities which everyone should enjoy, should be a basis for defining current economic policies and putting their people and the planet at the centre of their policy-making.

People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

What is a sustainable lifestyle? It should give us warm shelter, feed us in a healthy way, and allow for work and social life, without too much transport.”

Sylvia Lorek
Chair Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Germany

It’s exactly in the moment of crisis that we need to take courageous decisions.”

Nis Christensen
Danish Environment Ministry

People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

What is a sustainable lifestyle? It should give us warm shelter, feed us in a healthy way, and allow for work and social life, without too much transport.”

Sylvia Lorek
Chair Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Germany

It’s exactly in the moment of crisis that we need to take courageous decisions.”

Nis Christensen
Danish Environment Ministry
The President’s Conclusions

With 30 influential speakers, including top-level decision-makers from the United Nations Secretariat, the European Commission and the European Parliament, plus lively debates with civil society representatives and experts, it was no surprise that Go sustainable, be responsible! provided plenty to think about. The conference message (see chapter two) summarised the most important conclusions. The general debates, and in particular the four workshops, provided the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion and led to more detailed policy recommendations which are outlined below.

1. Shifting towards sustainable development

Sustainable development was at the centre of the two general debates during the conference.

At present, the global economy is not working towards sustainable development: 1 billion human beings suffer from hunger in various parts of the world, and particularly in developing countries – a situation wholly at odds with the aim of the first Millennium Development Goal to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Increasing social and wealth inequalities within and between countries are hindering progress towards sustainable development and distributional equity. On the environmental side, current economic policies and put their people and the planet at the centre of their policy-making.

Moreover, the concept of sustainable development, as established by the UN summits in Rio in 1992 and in Johannesburg in 2002, represents more than just the green economy, and it is that concept that needs to be strengthened at Rio+20. Promoting a green economy has to be part of an overarching sustainable development strategy, striking a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while achieving distributional and intergenerational equity. Rio+20 should foster sustainable development through a series of actions. The most important – as outlined in the conference message – are agreement by world leaders on a concrete action plan for sustainable development and tools for continuous progress and implementation, such as Sustainable Development Goals, and the establishment of indicators for measuring economic and social progress and improving human welfare and quality of life, and preserving the natural environment.

In my view, the report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, and in particular its 56 recommendations, is a highly valuable source of inspiration for policies on sustainable development and should be taken into account by the negotiating parties.

It became very clear from the debates that the social dimension of sustainability policies. Improving access to essential services, such as water and sanitation, health and education, and essential social transfers – in cash or in kind – to provide minimum income security and access to services, will help to implement human rights. Investing in a Social Protection Floor means investing in social justice and economic development. Specific measures should ensure women’s equal rights and opportunities in political decision-making processes, their full participation in the economy and their universal access to good-quality and affordable family planning and other health services. Migration as a global phenomenon has to be seen in the context of sustainable development and therefore has to be considered in the Rio+20 process.

“People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”
Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“What is a sustainable lifestyle? It should give us warm shelter, feed us in a healthy way, and allow for work and social life, without too much transport.”
Sylvia Lorek
Chair, Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Germany

“It’s exactly in the moment of crisis that we need to take courageous decisions.”
Nis Christensen
Danish Environment Ministry

People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC

“People are realising that existing models and patterns do not work as they should. People are realising that we do not only have to talk about sustainable development, we also have to act on our words. World leaders need strong signals that decisions are wanted and expected.”

Staffan Nilsson
President of the EESC
2. Towards more sustainable agriculture

The agricultural sector needs to be reviewed from the perspective of maintaining secure access to food and water for all and conserving biodiversity, tackling food waste, managing water resources and mitigating climate change.

- Investment must be increased in sustainable agriculture, local technology and infrastructure in developing countries in order to improve food security, as agriculture and rural areas have a key role to play in economic and social development.

- Ecological agriculture should be fostered to combat deforestation, conserve soil and make use of locally generated resources such as organic fertilisers.

- Farmers should be rewarded for delivering ecosystem services that also foster sustainability, enabling smallholder food producers to break the subsistence cycle and including women farmers.

- Public spending on research, including farmer-focused research, should increase and target sustainable efficiency gains, promoting biodiversity and resilient farming systems and establishing food sovereignty.

- Agriculture policies should promote local and regional markets. Free Trade Agreements should be subjected to sustainability impact assessments.

The workshop Food, water and energy for everyone built on the results of the EESC conference on Food for everyone in May 2011 and extended this approach to the food-water-energy nexus.

Secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for everyone, the maintenance of the natural resources of our planet, and well functioning ecosystems should be at the centre of the strategies on poverty eradication. All these aspects need to be fully integrated, not treated separately, if we are to deal with the global food security crisis.
2. Eradicating poverty and ensuring access to food, water and energy for everyone

The workshop Food, water and energy for everyone built on the results of the EESC conference on Food for everyone in May 2011 and extended this approach to the food-water-energy nexus. Secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for everyone, the maintenance of the natural resources of our planet, and well functioning ecosystems should be at the centre of the strategies on poverty eradication. All these aspects need to be fully integrated, not treated separately, if we are to deal with the global food security crisis.

The workshop produced further recommendations on sustainable agriculture, water management, energy supply and civil society empowerment:

2.1 Towards more sustainable agriculture

- The agricultural sector needs to be reviewed from the perspective of maintaining secure access to food and water for all and conserving biodiversity, tackling food waste, managing water resources and mitigating climate change.
- Investment must be increased in sustainable agriculture, local technology and infrastructure in developing countries in order to improve food security, as agriculture and rural areas have a key role to play in economic and social development.
- Ecological agriculture should be fostered to combat deforestation, conserve soil and make use of locally generated resources such as organic fertilisers.
- Farmers should be rewarded for delivering ecosystem services that also foster sustainability, enabling smallholder food producers to break the subsistence cycle and including women farmers.
- Public spending on research, including farmer-focused research, should increase and target sustainable efficiency gains, promoting biodiversity and resilient farming systems and establishing food sovereignty.
- Agriculture policies should promote local and regional markets. Free Trade Agreements should be subjected to sustainability impact assessments.

For developing and emerging countries, it’s not a choice between protecting the environment or economic growth. By investing in green economies, you are promoting employment opportunities for all.”

Susanne Hoffmann
Regional Director, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

“There will be no Rio+40. By that time we will have changed either by design, or by collapse.”

Willy De Backer
Sustainability consultant and journalist

“Poverty is not natural, it’s created. There’s no crisis of production, it’s a crisis of distribution. The world produces enough to meet its needs.”

Mamadou Cissokho
Honorary President, Network of Peasant Organisations and Producers in West Africa
2.2 Improving the management of water and sanitation services

- Political leaders in Rio should renew their commitment to building sustainable water supplies and sanitation systems within a water-resource-efficient green economy.
- National integrated water resource management plans should include source protection at watershed level and a human rights framework for water and sanitation provision.
- Water partnerships should be established at international and national levels promoting sustainable water management and involving civil society and in particular women, who play a central role in water management at local level.

2.3 Securing access to sustainable and affordable energy

- Energy security is essential to reaching the MDGs. Combating energy poverty represents a new social priority.
- The UN initiative Sustainable energy for all should be supported, aiming at universal access to sustainable, affordable and modern energy services, doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030.
- Renewable energy sources should not endanger food and water security.

2.4 Empowering civil society

- Capacity building and education measures should empower civil society and enable farmers, workers, consumers, small producers and entrepreneurs, women, NGOs and young people to actively participate, shape and monitor decision-making at all levels.
- A proportion of financial resources, research and institutional support should be re-allocated from large, centralised projects to decentralised, small-scale projects that can be managed at local level in order to strengthen water, energy and food security for the poorest population groups.

3. Greening the economy and phasing out unsustainable consumption and production

Promoting the green economy at the Rio+20 conference and at national level, and how Europe can contribute, was the central issue in the first general debate and workshop 2 on sustainable consumption and production.

As stated in the conference message, setting up a green economy roadmap must be at the centre of the Rio+20 negotiations. We do not need mere recommendations, but a roadmap with clear goals and monitoring mechanisms, at the same time respecting the specific situations of countries.

Annual investment of 1.2-1.5% of worldwide GDP up to 2050 is necessary for a global transition to a green economy. This investment will also help to overcome the economic and financial crisis through sustainable solutions and act as a major stimulus for new investment and a source of new jobs. Rio+20 should be the location for a new global deal to ensure the investment necessary to green the economy. A globally-agreed tax on financial transactions should be considered, to fund sustainable development.

Distributional or environmental equity is an important issue to be considered in Rio. The planet’s natural resources are limited; they have to be shared fairly. Since European and other developed countries have by far the highest natural resource consumption rates, they will have to reduce their consumption substantially in order to free up resources for developing countries and future generations. A clear European commitment is necessary, to give the EU credibility in leading the way towards global sustainability.

Workshop 2 made very clear that sustainable consumption and production (SCP) – i.e. the use of services and products to ensure greater prosperity and a better quality of life using fewer natural resources – is at the heart of the green economy and thus SCP should be a key part of the mandate on a green economy roadmap to be adopted at Rio+20. In particular, the 10-year work programme on SCP, drawn up as part of the UN Marrakech process, must be adopted in Rio.

“The European Resource Efficiency Roadmap sets clear objectives for SCP policies. We have to promote SCP also globally at the Rio+20 conference”

Alberto Parenti
European Commission, DG Environment

“It’s very much about doing more with less. This change of behaviour is perhaps the part where the EEESC is very well placed.”

Ulla Sirkeinen
EEESC member, Finland
investment necessary to green the economy. A globally-agreed tax on financial transactions should be considered, to fund sustainable development.

Distributional or environmental equity is an important issue to be considered in Rio. The planet’s natural resources are limited; they have to be shared fairly. Since European and other developed countries have by far the highest natural resource consumption rates, they will have to reduce their consumption substantially in order to free up resources for developing countries and future generations. A clear European commitment is necessary, to give the EU credibility in leading the way towards global sustainability.

Workshop 2 made very clear that sustainable consumption and production (SCP) – i.e. the use of services and products to ensure greater prosperity and a better quality of life using fewer natural resources – is at the heart of the green economy and thus SCP should be a key part of the mandate on a green economy roadmap to be adopted at Rio+20. In particular, the 10-year work programme on SCP, drawn up as part of the UN Marrakech process, must be adopted in Rio.
Europe should offer to share its experiences and best practice examples on SCP.

3.2 Establishing corporate sustainability accountability

- SCP policies should take into account that sustainable consumer choices require the availability of affordable sustainable products and services on the market, clear and reliable consumer information and incentives. Policy measures should strengthen the role of consumer associations as agents of change and facilitate civil society dialogue by creating platforms for discussing visions of sustainable lifestyles and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

- Europe should offer to share its experiences and best practice examples on SCP.

3.1 Fostering SCP and the green economy with a broad range of instruments

- The UN roadmap to a green economy should include policy measures at international, national, regional and local levels using a broad spectrum of instruments to encourage the transition to a green economy, including regulatory measures, fiscal policy tools, green and social public procurement, the phasing-out of environmentally harmful subsidies, research on eco-innovation, the internalisation of environmental costs and other market-based incentives, while at the same time promoting sustainable lifestyles and the active involvement of consumers in the transition.

- SCP policies should take into account that sustainable consumer choices require the availability of affordable sustainable products and services on the market, clear and reliable consumer information and incentives. Policy measures should strengthen the role of consumer associations as agents of change and facilitate civil society dialogue by creating platforms for discussing visions of sustainable lifestyles and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

Workshop 2 came up with interesting further policy recommendations concerning the phasing-out of unsustainable consumption and production.

"We have to ensure consumers gain access to sustainable products at a reasonable price."
Pedro Narro
EESC member, Spain

"As long as there are no economic incentives to behave in a responsible manner, most people will not change. We need to review our attitude to the tax system: to tax what we burn and not what we earn."
Jo Leinen
Member of the European Parliament

"Consumers face a lot of confusion. There are a multitude of labels relating to environmental issues which give conflicting information. There’s a lot of ‘greenwash’ advertising misleading consumers."
Ursula Pachl
Deputy Director General, BEUC, the European Consumers’ Organisation

“We have to ensure consumers gain access to sustainable products at a reasonable price.”
Pedro Narro
EESC member, Spain

“As long as there are no economic incentives to behave in a responsible manner, most people will not change. We need to review our attitude to the tax system: to tax what we burn and not what we earn.”
Jo Leinen
Member of the European Parliament

“Consumers face a lot of confusion. There are a multitude of labels relating to environmental issues which give conflicting information. There’s a lot of ‘greenwash’ advertising misleading consumers.”
Ursula Pachl
Deputy Director General, BEUC, the European Consumers’ Organisation

Jo Leinen
Member of the European Parliament

Ursula Pachl
Deputy Director General, BEUC, the European Consumers’ Organisation
Europe should offer to share its experiences and best practice examples on SCP.

3.2 Establishing corporate sustainability accountability

- Europe should offer to share its experiences and best practice examples on SCP.
- Building on existing initiatives for corporate sustainability accountability and based on international guidelines and best practices, the Rio conference should work towards a framework for the corporate sustainability accountability of companies. The concept of partnership should be improved and used to enable businesses to reduce the adverse environmental and social impact of products along the supply chain and over their entire life-cycle.

Workshop 2 came up with interesting further policy recommendations concerning the phasing-out of unsustainable consumption and production.

3.1 Fostering SCP and the green economy with a broad range of instruments

- The UN roadmap to a green economy should include policy measures at international, national, regional and local levels using a broad spectrum of instruments to encourage the transition to a green economy, including regulatory measures, fiscal policy tools, green and social public procurement, the phasing-out of environmentally harmful subsidies, research on eco-innovation, the internalisation of environmental costs and other market-based incentives, while at the same time promoting sustainable lifestyles and the active involvement of consumers in the transition.

- SCP policies should take into account that sustainable consumer choices require the availability of affordable sustainable products and services on the market, clear and reliable consumer information and incentives. Policy measures should strengthen the role of consumer associations as agents of change and facilitate civil society dialogue by creating platforms for discussing visions of sustainable lifestyles and the exchange of experiences and best practices.
4. Ensuring a just transition to a green economy

The conference debates paid much attention to the social dimension of a green economy. The transition involves the creation of so-called green jobs and more environmentally friendly production processes for economies at all stages of development and in sectors and branches that are of key importance for further economic progress, such as renewable energy, sustainable transport and energy-efficient housing. Furthermore, all jobs should become greener, since the process means transforming the whole economy. However, reaping the social benefits of this transition needs active policy measures addressing social aspects and aiming to create decent work and high-quality jobs for the workforce. Speakers presented the policy recommendations on green jobs of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the ILO Green Jobs Programme, which provides global analysis and country assessments of the potential of green jobs, direct technical assistance and capacity building.

Workshop 3 drew up further policy recommendations on the just transition to a green economy:

4.1 Ensuring decent work

• Measures are needed to prevent de-industrialisation and carbon and job leakage from industrialised countries due to the transfer of production to other areas with lower standards and less decent jobs.
• Green economic activities and markets must be actively developed, with appropriate support, vocational training and re-training measures to create a suitably skilled labour force.
• Green jobs should provide decent work in terms of income, working conditions, social security, social rights and gender equality. Decent work as defined by the ILO is an essential factor in eradicating poverty and improving social cohesion and should become the ninth MDG.
• ILO core labour standards should be fully ratified and implemented, including the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation and freedom of association and collective bargaining.
• Innovative development of renewable, resource-efficient energies should be accompanied by a review of labour protection and social policy regulations to meet new demands, allowing for appropriate support, vocational training and re-training throughout professional life, to keep up with developments and innovation.
• Public funding should be adapted in order to address the social dimension of the transition to a green economy.
• Governments should ensure a functioning social dialogue with civil society and between the social partners and national and local authorities. New dialogue schemes should be considered to take account of the transnational aspects of global companies.

4.2 Addressing the social impact of the transition on citizens and consumers

• The social effects of environmental policies on citizens and consumers should be monitored. Policies should foster greater responsibility in citizens’ consumption choices. Dialogue with civil society must cover the nine major groups, as mentioned in Agenda 21.
• Green economic activities and markets must be actively developed, with appropriate support, vocational training and re-training measures to create a suitably skilled labour force.
• Sustainable products and services should be accessible to all. The greening of the economy should not marginalise low-wage earners or the less privileged sections of society.

“We should have lifelong learning, and talk about the environment. It’s not just young people: many others could benefit from this type of training.”

Vaia Tuuhia
European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

“If there are calls for more sacrifices, the mood among many ordinary working people is that they have sacrificed enough already. We need to set a more optimistic agenda.”

Frances O’Grady
Deputy General Secretary, British Trades Union Congress

“In the whole economy, North and South, in all sectors, we must reinforce the fundamental principles of decent work, dignity, independence, autonomy and freedom.”

Stefano Palmieri
EESC member, Italy
4. Ensuring a just transition to a green economy

The conference debates paid much attention to the social dimension of a green economy. The transition involves the creation of so-called green jobs and more environmentally friendly production processes for economies at all stages of development and in sectors and branches that are of key importance for further economic progress, such as renewable energy, sustainable transport and energy-efficient housing. Furthermore, all jobs should become greener, since the process means transforming the whole economy. However, reaping the social benefits of this transition needs active policy measures addressing social aspects and aiming to create decent work and high-quality jobs for the workforce. Speakers presented the policy recommendations on green jobs of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the ILO Green Jobs Programme, which provides global analysis and country assessments of the potential of green jobs, direct technical assistance and capacity building.

Workshop 3 drew up further policy recommendations on the just transition to a green economy.

4.1 Ensuring decent work

- Measures are needed to prevent de-industrialisation and carbon and job leakage from industrialised countries due to the transfer of production to other areas with lower standards and less decent jobs.

- Green economic activities and markets must be actively developed, with appropriate support, vocational training and re-training measures to create a suitably skilled labour force.

- Green jobs should provide decent work in terms of income, working conditions, social security, social rights and gender equality. Decent work as defined by the ILO is an essential factor in eradicating poverty and improving social cohesion and should become the ninth MDG.

- ILO core labour standards should be fully ratified and implemented, including the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation and freedom of association and collective bargaining.

- Innovative development of renewable, resource-efficient energies should be accompanied by a review of labour protection and social policy regulations to meet new demands, allowing for appropriate support, vocational training and re-training throughout professional life, to keep up with developments and innovation.

- Public funding should be adapted in order to address the social dimension of the transition to a green economy.

4.2 Addressing the social impact of the transition on citizens and consumers

- The social effects of environmental policies on citizens and consumers should be monitored. Policies should foster greater responsibility in citizens’ consumption choices. Dialogue with civil society must cover the nine major groups, as mentioned in Agenda 21.

- Sustainable products and services should be accessible to all. The greening of the economy should not marginalise low-wage earners or the less privileged sections of society.

- Governments should ensure a functioning social dialogue with civil society and between the social partners and national and local authorities. New dialogue schemes should be considered to take account of the transnational aspects of global companies.

4.3 Ensuring a transition to a green economy

- We should have lifelong learning, and talk about the environment. It’s not just young people: many others could benefit from this type of training.”

  Vaia Tuuhia
  European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

- If there are calls for more sacrifices, the mood among many ordinary working people is that they have sacrificed enough already. We need to set a more optimistic agenda.”

  Frances O’Grady
  Deputy General Secretary, British Trades Union Congress

- “In the whole economy, North and South, in all sectors, we must reinforce the fundamental principles of decent work, dignity, independence, autonomy and freedom.”

  Stefano Palmieri
  EESC member, Italy
5. Involving civil society in the transition to a green economy

Involving civil society at global, national and local levels is crucial for a successful transition to a green economy and sustainable societies. Policy-makers need to provide the enabling conditions, but in the end it is civil society actors’ everyday decisions and actions that will bring about sustainable economies and lifestyles. Therefore, appropriate systems for dialogue and democratic participation should be established at each level. The conference debates revealed that current models of participation are not sufficient and have to be improved. The Rio+20 discussions on governance and the institutional framework for sustainable development should consider the participatory aspect.

Conference workshop 4 made detailed policy proposals on civil society involvement:

5.1 Strengthening civil society participation at UN level

- The concept of partnerships, as introduced by the Johannesburg conference, should be thoroughly reviewed in order to step up implementation of the Rio principles and boost the involvement of civil society.
- A new Council for Sustainable Development should replace the Commission for Sustainable Development, made up of political leaders and reporting directly to the General Assembly in order to strengthen the international institutional framework for sustainable development. The future role of ECOSOC has to be clarified in this context.
- A new UN agency for the environment, based on UNEP, should be created with a revised and strengthened mandate and universal membership, and supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions.

5.2 Strengthening civil society participation at national and local levels

- Rio+20 should adopt measures to implement Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration by giving citizens the right to have access to information and to administrative and judicial proceedings, to generate an informed public debate about the key issues concerned.
- Consultation rights of civil society should be based on National Sustainable Development Plans, as agreed in Rio 1992, and governments should be obliged to carry out sustainability impact assessments before decisions are taken on projects or plans. Europe should offer to share its experiences in the area of methodology.
- Multi-stakeholder bodies representing civil society, such as economic and social councils and the National Sustainable Development Councils (as set out in Agenda 21) should be established or reinforced at national level, with sufficient funding and expertise to enable these councils to advise governments on sustainability strategies.

5.3 Introducing an ombudsman for future generations

- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- Multi-stakeholder bodies representing civil society, such as economic and social councils and the National Sustainable Development Councils (as set out in Agenda 21) should be established or reinforced at national level, with sufficient funding and expertise to enable these councils to advise governments on sustainability strategies.

- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.

5.4 Introducing an ombudsman for future generations

- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.

“Civil society has a decisive role to play, and must work actively and be bound into policy-making. We have to create a new international framework for sustainable development.”

Hans-Joachim Wilms
President of the ESF Sustainable Development Observatory

“Civil society has a decisive role to play, and must work actively and be bound into policy-making. We have to create a new international framework for sustainable development.”

Hans-Joachim Wilms
President of the ESF Sustainable Development Observatory

“In the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity, Rio+20 is a perfect way for us to show intergenerational solidarity and make sure young people are not lost in future.”

Lloyd Russell-Moyle
European Youth Forum

“We need to be more creative and think about how we involve a broader public. Social media offer ways of reaching out.”

Prof. Miranda Schreurs
Chair, European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils
5. Involving civil society in the transition to a green economy

Involving civil society at global, national and local levels is crucial for a successful transition to a green economy and sustainable societies. Policy-makers need to provide the enabling conditions, but in the end it is civil society actors’ everyday decisions and actions that will bring about sustainable economies and lifestyles. Therefore, appropriate systems for dialogue and democratic participation should be established at each level. The conference debates revealed that current models of participation are not sufficient and have to be improved. The Rio+20 discussions on governance and the institutional framework for sustainable development should consider the participatory aspect.

Conference workshop 4 made detailed policy proposals on civil society involvement:

5.1 Strengthening civil society participation at UN level

- The concept of partnerships, as introduced by the Johannesburg conference, should be thoroughly reviewed in order to step up implementation of the Rio principles and boost the involvement of civil society.
- A new Council for Sustainable Development should replace the Commission for Sustainable Development, made up of political leaders and reporting directly to the General Assembly in order to strengthen the international institutional framework for sustainable development. The future role of ECOSOC has to be clarified in this context.
- A new UN agency for the environment, based on UNEP, should be created with a revised and strengthened mandate and universal membership, and supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions.

5.2 Strengthening civil society participation at national and local levels

- Rio+20 should adopt measures to implement Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration by giving citizens the right to have access to information and to administrative and judicial proceedings, to generate an informed public debate about the key issues concerned.
- Consultation rights of civil society should be based on National Sustainable Development Plans, as agreed in Rio 1992, and governments should be obliged to carry out sustainability impact assessments before decisions are taken on projects or plans. Europe should offer to share its experiences in the area of methodology.
- Multi-stakeholder bodies representing civil society, such as economic and social councils and the National Sustainable Development Councils (as set out in Agenda 21) should be established or reinforced at national level, with sufficient funding and expertise to enable these councils to advise governments on sustainability strategies.
- The new Council for Sustainable Development and the new UN agency for the environment should serve as a focal point for civil society and include mechanisms for involving its representatives, based on the concept of the nine major groups as agreed in Agenda 21.

5.3 Introducing an ombudsman for future generations

- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- Multi-stakeholder bodies representing civil society, such as economic and social councils and the National Sustainable Development Councils (as set out in Agenda 21) should be established or reinforced at national level, with sufficient funding and expertise to enable these councils to advise governments on sustainability strategies.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.
- The Rio 1992 commitment to initiate and use dialogue with civil society at local level to carry out sustainability development should be renewed and implemented (Think global, act local!). Governments should step up and the UN should promote civil society capacity-building programmes at local and community levels to enhance active civil society involvement in local sustainable development. Specific attention should be given to rural communities.

“Civil society has a decisive role to play, and must work actively and be bound into policy-making. We have to create a new international framework for sustainable development.”

Hans- Joachim Wilms
President of the ESF Sustainable Development Observatory
The European Economic and Social Committee and its Sustainable Development Observatory

In the European inter-institutional set-up, the EESC helps to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU by enabling civil society organisations in the Member States to express their views at European level.

The EESC is strongly committed to European integration, and fulfils three key missions:

- helping the European Parliament, Council and Commission to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground, by making use of EESC members’ experience and representativeness, and through dialogue and efforts to secure a consensus in the general interest;
- developing a more participatory EU which is more in touch with popular opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society;
- promoting the values on which European integration is founded, and advancing – in Europe and across the world – the cause of democracy and participatory democracy, as well as the role of civil society organisations.

Set up by the EESC in 2006 in response to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) works within the Committee to tackle and promote sustainable development policies across all sectors. It is composed of 33 members drawn from a wide range of interests and representing all Committee sections.

In its institutional capacity as mediator between civil society and the EU institutions, the SDO:

- analyses sustainable development issues and prepares reports and opinions on EU draft legislation and action programmes;
- stimulates debate on sustainable development;
- shares best practice and fosters exchanges on sustainable development.

The SDO is actively committed to supporting the EESC president’s programme on sustainable development, as well as advancing the objectives at the core of its mandate in particular, mainstreaming sustainable development throughout the EESC’s consultative work.

It has played a key part in preparing the EU contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. The SDO president, Hans-Joachim Wilms, was the EESC rapporteur on the Rio+20 opinions. Organising the EESC conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20 has been one of the Observatory’s key activities, bringing together civil society organisations from around Europe to put forward their views on what they believe should come out of Rio+20.

The SDO has also been active in formulating EESC policy, first of all through three opinions, adopted in September 2011, on civil society’s contribution to Rio+20, resource efficient Europe, and the EU low-carbon economy roadmap 2050.

The conference message itself was set out in an EESC opinion adopted on 22 February 2012, which contributed to preparing the EU position in the Rio+20 negotiations. Building on this, the EESC has been working on further Rio-related opinions, to be adopted prior to the UN conference, on the resource efficiency roadmap 2050, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns in the EU, and the EU Sustainable Strategy Progress Report 2011. Lastly, the SDO contributes to dialogue with organised civil society in other parts of the world, in the run-up to and during Rio+20.
The European Economic and Social Committee and its Sustainable Development Observatory

In the European inter-institutional set-up, the EESC helps to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU by enabling civil society organisations in the Member States to express their views at European level.

The EESC is strongly committed to European integration, and fulfils three key missions:

• helping the European Parliament, Council and Commission to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground, by making use of EESC members’ experience and representativeness, and through dialogue and efforts to secure a consensus in the general interest;
• developing a more participatory EU which is more in touch with popular opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society;
• promoting the values on which European integration is founded, and advancing – in Europe and across the world – the cause of democracy and participatory democracy, as well as the role of civil society organisations.

Set up by the EESC in 2006 in response to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) works within the Committee to tackle and promote sustainable development policies across all sectors. It is composed of 33 members drawn from a wide range of interests and representing all Committee sections.

In its institutional capacity as mediator between civil society and the EU institutions, the SDO:

• analyses sustainable development issues and prepares reports and opinions on EU draft legislation and action programmes;
• stimulates debate on sustainable development;
• shares best practice and fosters exchanges on sustainable development.

The SDO is actively committed to supporting the EESC president’s programme on sustainable development, as well as advancing the objectives at the core of its mandate in particular, mainstreaming sustainable development throughout the EESC’s consultative work.

It has played a key part in preparing the EU contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. The SDO president, Hans-Joachim Wilms, was the EESC rapporteur on the Rio+20 opinions. Organising the EESC conference Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20 has been one of the Observatory’s key activities, bringing together civil society organisations from around Europe to put forward their views on what they believe should come out of Rio+20.

The SDO has also been active in formulating EESC policy, first of all through three opinions, adopted in September 2011, on civil society’s contribution to Rio+20, resource efficient Europe, and the EU low-carbon economy roadmap 2050.

The conference message itself was set out in an EESC opinion adopted on 22 February 2012, which contributed to preparing the EU position in the Rio+20 negotiations. Building on this, the EESC has been working on further Rio-related opinions, to be adopted prior to the UN conference, on the resource efficiency roadmap 2050, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns in the EU, and the EU Sustainable Strategy Progress Report 2011. Lastly, the SDO contributes to dialogue with organised civil society in other parts of the world, in the run-up to and during Rio+20.
For more information:

- EESC website: www.eesc.europa.eu
- Sustainable Development Observatory website: www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.sdo-observatory
- Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20:
  www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-civil-society-rio20
- Rio+20 NGO Platform: http://rioplus20ngoplus.com/
- EESC SDO e-mail: sdo@eesc.europa.eu

Relevant EESC Opinions mentioned in this brochure:

- The EESC position on the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
- The contribution of European organised civil society to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio (Rio+20)
- A resource-efficient Europe – Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 Strategy
- A Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050
- A Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe
- Promotion of sustainable production and consumption in the EU
- The 2011 monitoring report of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy: the EESC evaluation

All opinions are available via the following link: www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.sdo-observatory-opinions