



Up until now environmental EU legislation has tended to tackle point sources of pollution, for instance individual pollutants and specific economic activities, through so-called 'end-of pipe' solutions and technical regulations. With the new environmental 'thematic strategies' the Commission is proposing a series of long-term schemes that address complex environmental issues more globally. They are called 'thematic' for three reasons: the issues are 'themes' rather than individual problems; they are created by a whole range of actors; their resolution will require an integrated, cross-cutting approach and innovative solutions.

The seven thematic strategies currently being finalised tackle air pollution, the marine environment, soil, pesticides, natural resources, waste and the urban environment. The strategies set out an integrated package of measures to achieve their goals, but also give a broad view on each issue. They are expected to be presented by the European Commission this year, as required by the 6th Environment Action Programme, the Commission's environmental policy agenda 2002-2012.

The approach of the thematic strategies cuts across various policy areas such as industry, energy or transport, making it easier to tackle horizontal and interrelated issues. The strategies take up to a 20-year perspective. They are based on an in-depth review of existing environmental policy, thorough research and state-of-the-art science.

Where appropriate, the life-cycle approach is used, for example for resources and waste. The strategies are also an exercise in 'Better Regulation'. Where there is legislation, they propose to revise, simplify, clarify and even repeal it. And because ambitions are high, some strategies conclude that we need to further improve our knowledge base before we can introduce concrete targets.

The strategies have been developed on the basis of wide consultation; for the air pollution strategy, over 100 meetings with experts were held, as well as an internet consultation that attracted an unprecedented 11,000 comments. Many more people will have been associated with the drafting of these strategies than has been the case in the past.

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>> Two internet consultations are on-going at the moment: one for collecting input for the thematic strategy on soil and another one for the strategy on urban environment. The consultations are designed not only to obtain expert views on technical matters: they also seek to involve citizens.

On the consultation form for the thematic strategy on soil, the main problems as well as key terms such as “salinisation” or “compaction” are explained, so no particular familiarity with the issue is expected from the respondents. In the consultation on urban environment people are asked to express their views on the quality of the urban environment in which they live and work, and to tell what measures they would be prepared to take themselves to improve the situation in their own city. Interactive on-line multiple choice questionnaires have been developed for easy use.

The consultation on the thematic strategy on urban environment (http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/public_consultation_2005.htm) runs until 21 September and the one on soil (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/soil/index.htm>) until 26 September 2005.

A series of books and fact sheets describing the thematic strategies will be produced by DG Environment as from this autumn, along the adoption schedule of the strategies. They will be published in electronic format on the Environment website of the Commission (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/>) as soon as they become available.

The EECN is DG Environment's support structure for the European Environmental Communication Networks. Currently these include the Green Spiders Network and The Network of Urban Forums for Sustainable Development.

The website can be accessed here:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/networks/index_en.htm

If you want to know more about this communication material or are already interested in ordering paper copies, please contact Carina Vopel at the DG ENV Communication unit at mailto:carina.vopel@cec.eu.int?subject=thematic_strategies_communication_material

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