



Belgian Federal Report 2009

 **Sustainable Development**
Indicators, Objectives and
Visions | A brief presentation


Sustainable Development

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Sustainable development in concrete terms

As defined by the Brundtland Report (*) sustainable development is a “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (p. 43). While this definition is often considered as ‘too abstract’, nothing is more concrete than ‘needs’, “*in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given*” (ibidem). Indeed, sustainable development is a matter of fundamental rights, such as the right to food security, a healthy environment, sufficient education, etc.

This brochure presents the 5th Belgian Federal Report on Sustainable Development. In this Report, the accent is placed on an often-forgotten requirement in sustainable development: the measurement of progress made. Indeed, it is only possible to know if a current development is following a truly sustainable path if appropriately chosen indicators measure its progress over time. It is also necessary to fix markers by which the path followed can be evaluated.

In this respect, the 5th Federal Report on Sustainable Development is different from the Belgian Federal Reports published up to now because it focuses on the requirement for measurement. It presents several economic growth statistics and indicators, but also many social and environmental indicators. These indicators are presented in a way that shows how the economy interacts continuously with society and the environment and crucially depends on them in the long run.

(*) Published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, the Brundtland Report, entitled *Our Common Future*, was the first document to define this concept while also outlining the policies needed to achieve a ‘sustainable development’.

Context

Sustainable Development Indicators, Objectives and Visions, the 5th Federal Report on Sustainable Development, deals with the much-debated question of progress indicators, which allow us to measure the evolution of our societies towards sustainable development.

The Report focuses on the study of a table of **sustainable development indicators (SDIs)**; a table that shows to what extent the **strategic sustainable development objectives (SSDOs)** are being achieved in Belgium. It also looks at the choice of these strategic objectives in the context of long-term visions of the evolution of society, the environment, the economy and public policies.

This Report intends to make decision-makers aware of the usefulness of indicators for governing our development. It also aims to help them understand the contents of indicators and monitor their trends, whether or not these indicators are associated with objectives. By showing how diverse the indicators are and how they interact, this Report can also help in making decisions that accelerate progress towards objectives.

The first part of the Report shows the usefulness of the SDIs and the SSDOs. They are useful for measuring the progress of Belgium at the federal level, but they are also indispensable in building visions for long-term sustainable development at the global level.

The second part of the Report studies the contents of the SDIs. These are looked at more closely for several synthetic indicators, as well as the detailed contents of those SDI tables that are useful for federal-level decisions. Two tables are proposed. One includes 88 indicators; the other, more limited, offers a reduced number of 18 indicators that are particularly useful for policy-making.

On the basis of this examination, the Report then makes **recommendations** regarding the tools that allow the progress of society to be measured. This monitoring of the progress of society is one of the missions given to the Federal Reports by the *Belgian Act of 5 May 1997 on the Co-ordination of Federal Sustainable Development Policy*.



2002/ 1999/

/2005

After the first two Reports (1999 and 2002), exploring new concepts and methods for trends and policy analysis and for long-term foresight studies, the third Federal Report (2005) focused mainly on the ex post evaluation of the federal sustainable development strategy.

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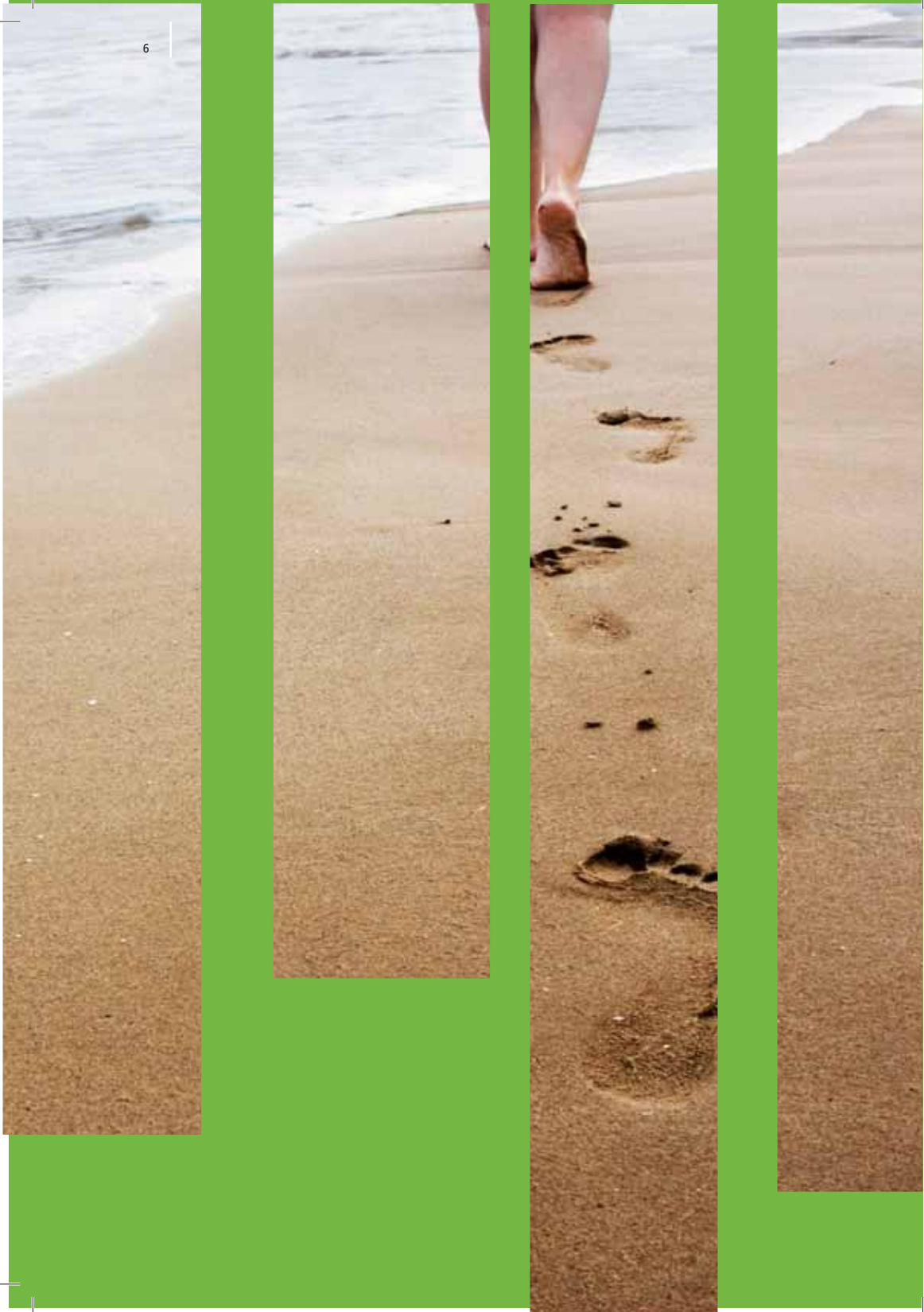
The fourth Report (2007) presented two scenarios of future living conditions in 2050 and of the policies that should be followed in order to ensure a viable future.

/2009

The fifth Federal Report (2009) recommendations are thus based on more than a decade of expertise and reporting by the Federal Planning Bureau's Task Force on Sustainable Development. This experience facilitates the critical approach of the existing tools.

This Report is related to the *Round table on SDIs for assisting policy-making*. This round table was set up on 19 March 2009 by the federal Minister for Climate and Energy, who is in charge of Sustainable Development. The Report also gives a partial response to the demand from civil society, expressed by the Belgian Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD) who insisted repeatedly on *"the need to develop in Belgium a limited national list of sustainable development indicators that could constitute a useful instrument in the process of developing a national sustainable development strategy, especially in identifying its priorities"* (FCSD opinion on SDIs, 2007; FPB translation).







Part I: Measuring the progress of society

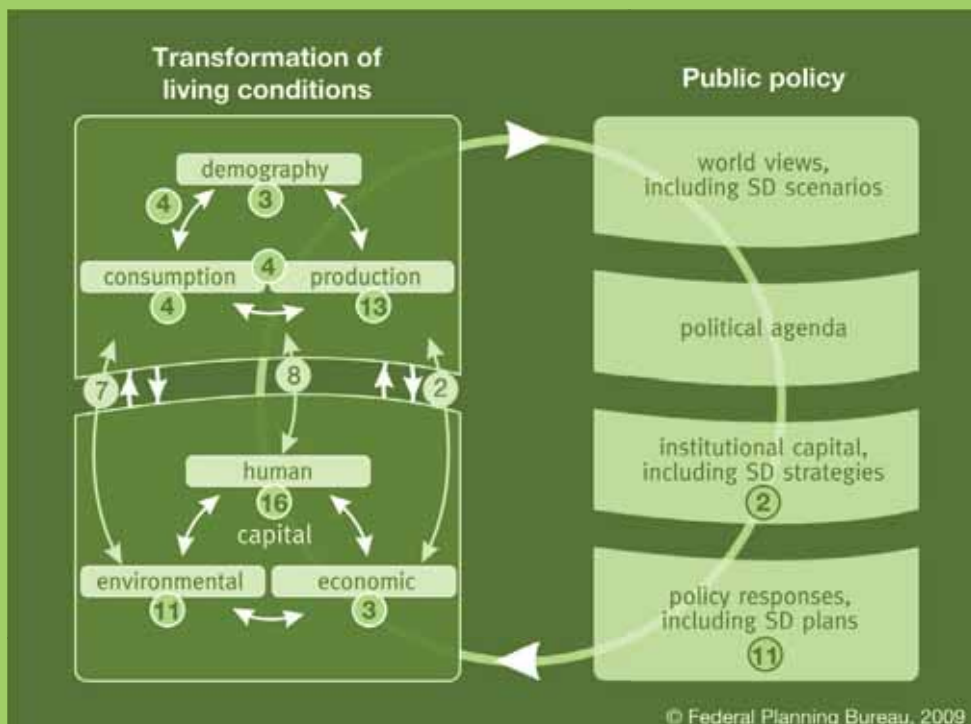
1.1 Strategic evaluation of the progress of society

The Federal Report 2009 evaluates the Belgian situation on the basis of a strategic overview of sustainable development indicators (SDIs). This overview summarizes the current progress of society towards strategic sustainable development objectives (SSDOs).

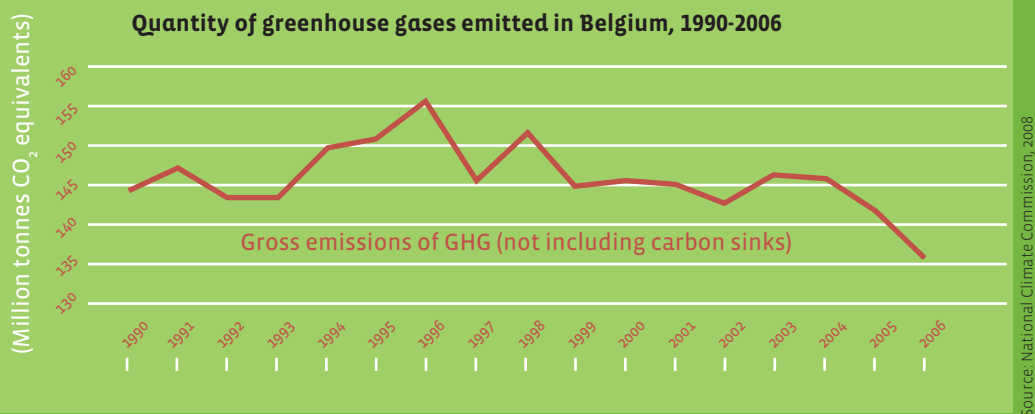


The SDIs are essential for measuring development trends on questions as important as demographic and economic flows, social and environmental pressures, and stocks of human, environmental and economic resources. Changes in all these components are transformations of the living conditions of a society. The SDIs can measure different flows and stocks of the TransGovern model, which links these transformations (in the left box of the illustration) with government policies (in the right box). TransGovern stands for *Transformation of living conditions through Governing*. The SDI table in the Report is structured according to this model.

Distribution of the 88 SDIs over the TransGovern model components



The Report shows that the indicators of demographic and economic flows and of flows of pressures are registering some progress in the direction of the SSDOs. This is especially so in the areas of energy and the climate.

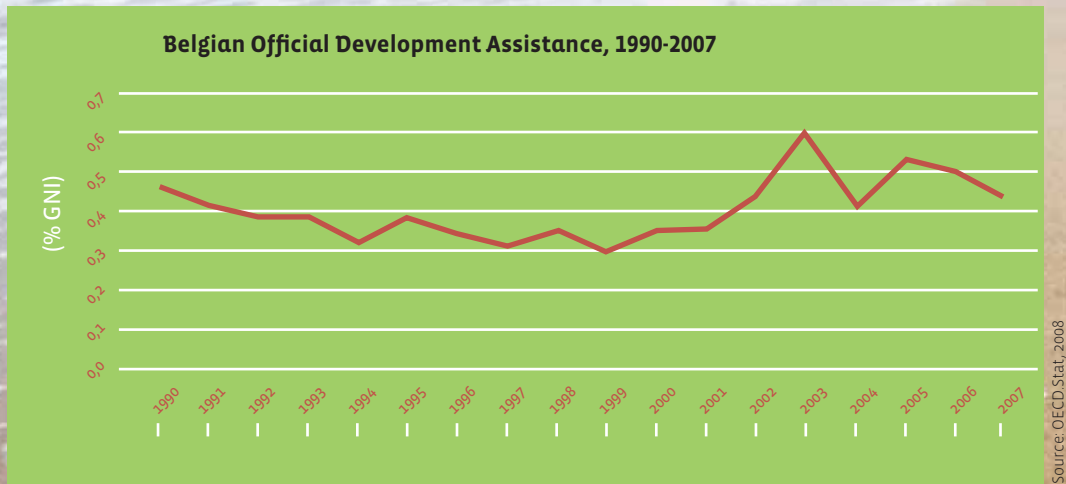


The encouraging results in the area of energy and greenhouse gas emissions should not hide the areas in which progress still has to be achieved. Indeed, for the indicators that show the state of the stocks of human and environmental resources, progress is barely perceptible.

- The state of human resources in Belgium remains weakened by the poverty risk and the unemployment rate. In 2007, the poverty risk affected 15% of the total population and the unemployment rate was at 12.6% of the active population. Since the end of 2008, the unemployment rate has increased, in the current context of the economic crisis.
- The state of environmental resources is still a concern as regards air pollution and biodiversity. However, this observation should be complemented by the environmental indicators monitored by the Regions.
- As regards the state of economic stocks, the evolution of the public debt was still relatively positive up to 2007, but the situation has deteriorated since then.



The indicators for public expenditure on meeting some of the challenges in sustainable development on Research and Development and on Development Cooperation are far from having reached their objectives.



Changes in all these SDI trends were evaluated by applying the quantitative method used by Eurostat in *Measuring progress towards a more sustainable Europe. 2007 monitoring report of the EU sustainable development strategy*. 54 of the 88 SDIs could be evaluated in the light of objectives adopted in the sustainable development strategies at different policy levels (Belgian federal, EU and UN levels). For 17 of these SDIs with more specific and time-bound targets, changes were evaluated in the light of these targets. Applying the Eurostat rules, almost 50% of the 54 SDIs showed a favourable change towards their SSDOs. Less than 30% of the 17 SDIs with a target were on track to their target.

Evaluation of SDI trend changes: overview of the results

	Evaluation of changes towards SSDOs, 2000-2007	Evaluation of changes towards targets, each with a specific period
Number of SDIs (and %)	Favourable: 25 (46.3%)	On target path: 5 (29.4%)
	None or insufficient: 19 (35.2%)	Below target path: 3 (17.6%)
	Unfavourable: 10 (18.5%)	Far from target path: 9 (52.9%)
	54 (100%)	17 (100%)

For different reasons 34 SDIs were not evaluated with regard to objectives or targets. In 13 cases the evaluation was not possible due to a lack of data. 12 other SDIs were so-called contextual indicators: they provide useful information but a normative interpretation of these indicators is not desirable. 4 SDIs were considered to be under discussion; for these indicators, objectives have not yet been fixed. Finally 5 SDIs were not used to measure the progress of Belgian society because they give information on the state of the world.

1.2 Strategic objectives and long-term visions

The Report reminds us that the definition of the strategic objectives is based on social (example 1), environmental (example 2) and economic (example 3) commitments.

Example 1

Every person should have access to at least 20 litres of clean water per day

(United Nations Development Programme, 2006)

Example 2

To achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss

(Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002)

Example 3

The public debt of the States should not exceed 60% of GDP (gross domestic product)

(Maastricht Treaty, 1992)



These commitments have been undertaken by the international community in the context of various strategies negotiated independently of each other. These various objectives are therefore defined in the context of different long-term visions. As they result from separate negotiations, it is far from easy to ensure coherence between them.

Consequently, the Report explores two important questions: on the one hand, the question of trends and progress of indicators towards their strategic objectives; on the other hand, the question of the integration of these indicators and objectives into coherent visions for the current and long-term development of society. As they have been adopted independently of each other to resolve specific problems, can the SSDOs be achieved together?

These are still much-debated questions. The objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are, for instance, often presented as contradictory to economic growth and/or employment objectives. Yet all these objectives concern human activities as well as their effects on the state of human and environmental resources. Achieving them therefore calls for integrated vision and coordinated policy decisions. In their decision-making, the political authorities would find it useful to adopt an overall view of these objectives. This would help clarify for them the risks posed by vicious circles and on the opportunities for virtuous synergies.



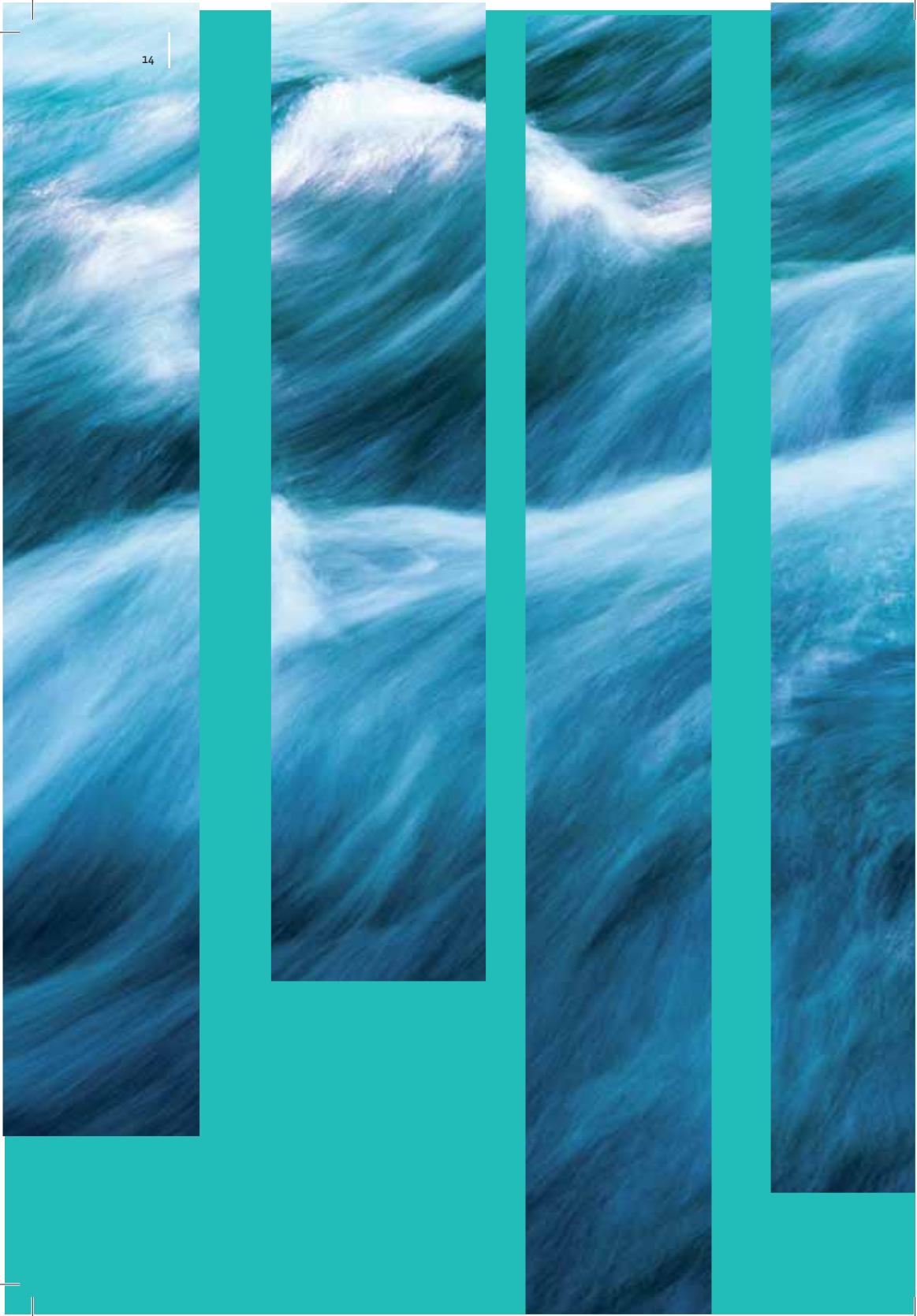
The efforts agreed on to date to increase the integration of these objectives and to connect these decisions to each other with the help of the SDIs are still insufficient, as much in the preparation of national policies as in that of international policies.



Reducing the number of individuals who are overweight, with too much cholesterol or excessively high blood pressure, etc. (correlated to cardiovascular disease and other handicaps) **requires major changes in current food and transport consumption patterns.** In a period when State resources have been reduced, there is a great risk of a vicious spiral starting, where the number of health problems leads to ever-increasing social security costs and a deterioration in standards of living and of activity in society. Parallel monitoring of the indicators for the evolution of consumption patterns, health, public debt, etc., can more effectively throw light on interdependent developments in very different areas, including food production patterns. A more systemic follow-up would be beneficial for decision-makers and could help to break vicious circles through upstream action. For example, this could involve prevention policies aimed at citizens or action on the production patterns of agro-food businesses.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions requires major changes in production patterns, as well as in consumption patterns. When energy prices are low it is difficult to encourage people to change their behaviour. Furthermore, energy savings are often thought of as opposed to economic growth. Actions that create jobs in energy-saving activities or eco-efficient production allow gains to be made in interdependent developments in two very different areas: reductions in emissions and the eradication of poverty. In this respect, the International Labour Organization, in association with other organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme, reminds us that the recycling, public transport, agriculture, and sustainable forestry sectors offer good opportunities to link production to the protection of the environment and the creation of jobs, both skilled and unskilled.





Part II: Measurement tools

The Federal Report 2009 makes an important contribution to the debate on measurement tools. These tools allow a clear long-term vision to be constructed of the interdependent development trends of a country. In the 1940s and 1950s the national accounts began to produce indicators that were useful in steering economic development. At that time this was mainly a matter of facing the challenge of reconstruction after the Second World War.

The indicators that came out of this accounting system, such as the GDP and the public finance indicators, are still very useful for measuring some of society's progress toward sustainable development. But **new crises bring new challenges that require, in their turn, new tools**. For this reason, the national accounts system is constantly improving itself and other accounting systems are emerging.

The Federal Report 2009 reminds us that there are two major categories of tools derived from these accounting systems: strongly synthetic indicators (2.1) and tables of indicators (2.2).

2.1 Strongly synthetic indicators

The Report systematically looks at a limited number of aggregate or composite SDIs, bringing in key information in addition to that contained in the GDP. **The Report shows that over the last twenty years, the classical indicators, such as the GDP, have been complemented by other synthetic indicators**, even though these are not as well-known. These other synthetic indicators provide information on the social, environmental and institutional challenges at stake.





GDP and the national accounts

The **gross domestic product** (GDP) or gross domestic income (GDI) is the best known measure of a country's overall economic activity. Often quoted in public debates, it is used as a standard synthetic benchmark by policy-makers throughout the world because GDP growth is generally considered as the key indicator for assessing the effectiveness of overall economic performance, including in governments' recovery plans.

GDP or GDI has also been used often as a proxy indicator for overall societal development or even been treated as a measure of well-being, although these notions (development and well-being) extend far beyond the measure of annual economic flows. Nonetheless, it can be considered as an **important indicator of economic equilibrium between production, consumption and income** because it strikes a balance between three kinds of annual flows. The most direct of these three ways to calculate it is the 'product approach', summing the value added by each production activity, in all sectors, within the borders of a country during a year. However, total GDP or GDI can also be calculated by the 'income approach', the sum of all producers' incomes during the same year. Thirdly, there is an 'expenditure approach', summing the products allocated to various ends, like consumption, investment, exports and stocks. In the latter approach, as goods and services produced but not sold in the country (exports) are included, it is necessary to take away expenditures on goods and services not produced in the country (imports).

GDP has been developed since the 1930s **within national accounts systems**. These systems allow comparisons of both growth and per capita GDI between countries and regions. Therefore the *Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* states that GDP "*is the most widely used measure of economic activity. There are international standards for its calculation, and much thought has gone into its statistical and conceptual bases*" (Report by the Commission, p. 21). However the need to improve 'beyond GDP' the knowledge base for public debates and policy-making with information on environmental sustainability or social cohesion has increased in recent decades. In its communication *GDP and beyond* the European Commission underlines that "*Reflection on how to complement GDP is not new. Several routes are being explored by international and national institutions*" (COM(2009) 433, p. 3). Some of these routes (not explored in the Federal Report 2009) are seeking to **improve or adjust GDP**. Others are developing **alternative strongly synthetic indicators** (such as the Human Development Index and the Ecological Footprint) or broad ranges of social and environmental indicators (often regrouped in **SDI sets**). Another route comes from the '**satellite accounts**', combining information on society and the environment with the economic information contained in the national accounts. They allow indicators to be calculated that link this social or environmental data with this economic data.



Indicators based on Environmental Satellite Accounts

Environmental Satellite Accounts (ESA) provide detailed information on various environmental flows and stocks, such as eco-taxes, raw material flows, polluting emissions and natural resources. As they use the same classification system as the national accounts, the ESA allow the establishment of an **explicit link between economic activity and environmental data**, such as the emissions of acidifying gases per sector.

ESA are compiled by the **statistical authorities**. The **ESA methodology** has progressively been developed and harmonised at the European level by Eurostat recommendations. A number of pilot satellite accounts have been produced in Belgium by the Federal Planning Bureau. Such studies only account for overall impacts on the environment. They do not differentiate, for example, between two goods produced with different methods such as fruits produced by either organic or intensive agriculture.

ESA can reflect the coupling or decoupling between GDP growth and environmental degradation. ESA could also provide synthetic indicators for designing decoupling objectives and monitoring sustainable consumption and production policies. By linking them with other information, such as consumer surveys, **it is possible to evaluate households' consumption pressures on the environment** or even differentiate those pressures by categories of households. This could contribute to developing synergies between policies, for example those to eradicate poverty and those to protect the environment.



The Ecological Footprint and Biological Capacity indicators

The **Ecological Footprint (EF)** and **Biological Capacity (BC)** indicators provide synthetic information on environmental flows and stocks. The EF gives information, at the level of a country or a large territory, on pressures exerted by consumption and production activities on the environment, while BC gives information on the state of the environment. One of the strengths of the EF and BC is that several environmental issues are expressed in a single common unit, the global hectare (gha). The EF and BC do not, however, encompass all environmental issues. They exclude, for example, air, water and soil pollution, water use and non-renewable resources depletion.

The EF and BC have been **developed by the non-governmental organisation, Global Footprint Network**, using its own accounting system, which is completely different from the national accounts system. It was launched only recently, and the methodology and data collection processes are still under development. The EF measures, in land and water area (in gha), the renewable resources and fossil energy embedded in the goods and services used by a population, as well as the land occupied by infrastructure. The BC measures, also in gha, the capacity of the land and water area (of the territory where this population lives) to produce the renewable resources taken into account in the EF. It depends, among other factors, on the technologies and production patterns used in each region. The comparison between the EF and the BC indicates whether a population shows an ecological surplus or deficit on its own territory.

The EF and BC together certainly bring a vision of the size of the environmental challenge that GDP has not even tried to measure, but these indicators cannot be interconnected. **It is unclear how the EF and the BC could guide policy decisions** because reducing the ecological deficit evaluated by these indicators cannot be connected clearly to key policy targets such as greenhouse gas emissions reduction rates. To reduce this deficit, public authorities could even be inclined to increase environmental pressures that are not taken into account in the EF and BC. For example, turning woodlands into monoculture forests would increase the capacity to produce renewable resources and hence the BC, but would damage biological diversity. However, owing to the apparent simplicity of the concepts, the pairing of the EF and BC has been **largely used until now as an awareness-raising tool**.



The Human Development Index

The **Human development index** (HDI) is a synthetic indicator of human capital that combines four indicators covering three key dimensions of human development: health (life expectancy at birth), knowledge (adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio in education) and standard of living (logarithm of GDP per capita in purchasing power parity US\$ as a proxy). The HDI *“was created to re-emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth”* (UNDP web site, 2009). An important use of HDI is to compare the health and education performances of countries with similar standards of living. However, some key aspects of human development are not covered, such as political participation or knowledge acquired through channels other than formal education.

The HDI was developed by the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) and has been published annually since 1990 in the Human Development Report. The UNDP also developed other similar indicators, for example the human poverty index and the gender-related development index. HDI is computed using a simple methodology. The values obtained for each of the three key dimensions are normalised between 0 and 1 and, therefore, for the HDI as it is the simple average of these three dimensions. Countries fall into one of four categories, ‘very high’, ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ human development, depending on their HDI level: at or above 0.9, from 0.8 to 0.899, from 0.5 to 0.799 or below 0.5, respectively.

The HDI would not exist without the GDP but it is a **better measure of social progress**. As HDI design is mostly targeted on developing countries, it can be used by donor countries to support ODA policies or by recipient countries to formulate development objectives. From an overarching sustainable development perspective (including its social pillar), the value of 0.8 could be adopted as a minimum development goal.



Indicators of public finances

The **seven synthetic indicators of public finances** in the SDI table are constructed from the **national accounts**. One of them provides overall information on the level of the public debt. The other six measure specific categories of public revenues and expenditures: social security revenues, energy and environmental tax revenues, public research and development expenditures, social security expenditures, environmental protection expenditures and official development assistance expenditures. The government can use all of these public finance flows to meet sustainable development challenges. As they are part of the annual government budget, these revenues and expenditures contribute to budgetary deficits or surpluses and so influence the long-term evolution of the public debt.

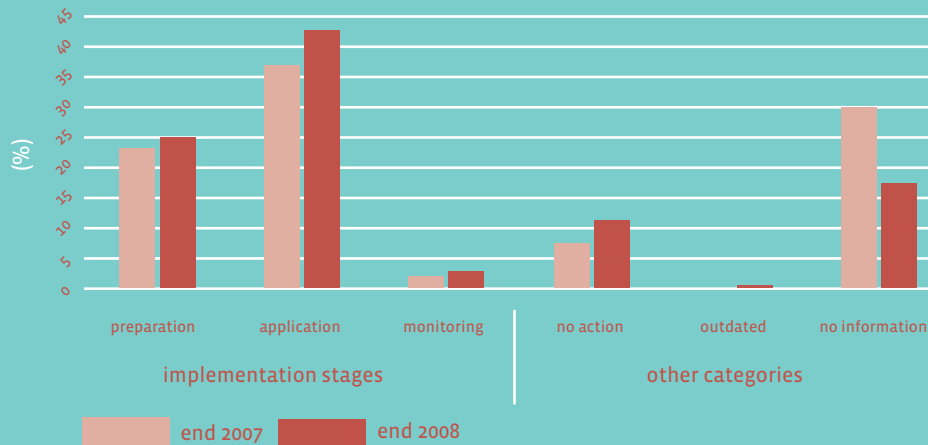
It is obvious that the **public finance indicators are important for policy-making**. Controlling public debt is a major concern of sustainable development policy. Not only will today's public debt have to be paid back by future generations, but the 'sustainability' of public finances also determines the 'policy space' of the government. Public services in the fields of health care, pension provision, education, public transport, environmental protection, etc., depend on the state of public finances. These services – that are clearly linked to sustainable development objectives such as poverty eradication and protection of health and natural resources – are crucial for the quality of life in a society. Without public funding from tax money, the majority of the population could not afford these services.



The indicator of the implementation of the Federal Plans for Sustainable Development

A synthetic indicator was constructed in Belgium to give information on the **progress of measures** contained in the **Federal Plans for Sustainable Development**. In particular, it clusters the measures according to the stage of implementation they are at ('preparation', 'application' or 'monitoring') or in another category ('no action', 'outdated' or 'no information'). This indicator measures the **contribution of public policies to society's evolution towards sustainable development**. It constitutes an important tool for helping the public authorities to monitor and account for the policies they implement.

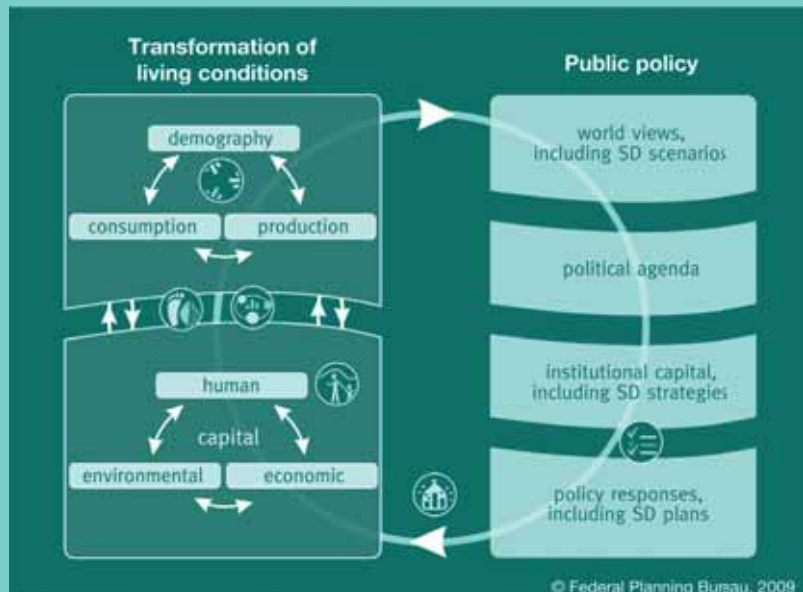
Total number of measures from the Federal Plan for Sustainable Development 2004-2008, by three implementation stages or three other categories, end 2007 and end 2008



Source: TFSD analysis based on data from the ICSD and the public services

At the end of 2008, 71% of the 2004-2008 Plan measures (280 of 395) were at a stage of implementation. For 11% or 44 of the measures, no action had been undertaken. For 17% or 69 of the measures, information was missing.

Strongly synthetic indicators positioned in the TransGovern model



2.2 Tables of indicators

The Report gives a large table of 88 SDIs and a reduced table of 18 SDIs. These two tables are based on information sheets that summarize problems according to a common format showing their relevance to measuring progress towards a sustainable society. Each sheet explains, for example, the links between these SDIs and the sustainable development strategies and their objectives.

Both the large and the reduced tables have the great advantage of allowing problems that are sometimes very different to be described and understood in accordance with a shared methodology.

The Report deals with the question of tables – large or reduced – that contain SDIs that are more or less synthetic. These tables allow a better view of the diversity of interdependent social, environmental and economic flows and stocks. The Report contains 51 information sheets that document not only the problems that are chosen systematically, but that also allow the evolution of the SDIs to be monitored and assessed as either favourable or counter to an increase in the well-being of society.

If the Report contains as many as 88 indicators in these sheets, it is because sustainable development is a broad and complex area. However, as a simplified view is necessary, the report also contains a reduced table with 18 indicators selected from the large table. These 18 indicators correspond to political priorities in the diversity of problems on the development path. Based on the experience of other countries and of international organizations, this shortened list – intended to be debated at the federal level – is of a comparable size to that of the lists that exist at other levels of decision-making – regional or international.



Key indicators in the reduced table (selected from the large SDI table)	Themes
Number of persons legally residing in Belgium, distributed by three age groups	Demographic change
Gross domestic product (growth rate)	Socio-economic development
Materials intensity	Sustainable consumption and production patterns
Share of energy consumption from renewable energy sources in primary energy consumption	Energy and climate change
Intensity in road transport	Sustainable transport
Apparent meat consumption per inhabitant by type of meat	Food
Share of the adult population with a BMI of 25 or more (overweight), by gender	Public health
Emitted amounts of greenhouse gasses	Energy and climate change
Emitted amounts of nitrogen in water by sector	Food
Share in gross fixed capital formation of businesses and government departments in GDP	Socio-economic development
Share of the population that is at risk of poverty in Belgium	Social inclusion
Rate of employment, distributed by three age groups	Socio-economic development
Life expectancy (at birth) by gender	Public health
Share of endangered bird species in Belgium	Natural resources
Number of commercial fish species in the North Sea and bordering waters for which the stock is outside safe biological limits	Natural resources
Consolidated gross debt in the sense of the Maastricht Treaty as a percentage of GDP	Good governance
Official development assistance as a percentage of GNI	Global partnership
Total number of measures from the Federal Plan for Sustainable Development, by three implementation stages or three other categories	Good governance



Recommendations

This evaluation of the current situation in Belgium regarding sustainable development concludes that although some progress in the direction of the sustainable development objectives has been observed for some flows, major efforts are still needed in other areas, particularly those regarding capital stocks. Whether socially, environmentally or economically, there are aspects of the evolution of the basic development capitals that are hardly reassuring.

The principal recommendation is to strengthen policies in the areas where indicators show an unfavourable evolution of our resources. However, the lack of good-quality tools for measuring this evolution prevents such a recommendation from being formulated in concrete terms. This is why this Federal Report makes ten recommendations.



The Report makes **five general recommendations**.

1. Do not over-limit the number of synthetic indicators that are adopted and publicly debated to monitor progress along the road of sustainable development. Furthermore, the Report recommends that a large table and a reduced table are adopted. Indeed, a reduction in information linked to choosing only one indicator or to a list of indicators that is too limited gives an excessively incomplete picture of society's progress.

2. Take into account the logic of the system in developing lists or tables of sustainable development indicators. The indicators represent interdependent developments that interconnect flows and stocks, as well as social, environmental, economic and governance aspects of development.

3. Define monitoring indicators as soon as each policy decision is adopted. These governance indicators should receive as much attention as those of social, environmental and economic performance. In fact, it is impossible to show the causal link between the policy decision and its ex post effect on performance and living conditions in society. In contrast, it is possible to follow closely the implementation of a measure to ensure that policy is more than mere announcement.



4. Make an inventory of gaps in the current data as a matter of urgency

and agree on efforts to fill them. The Report also recommends attending to the quality and coherence of the data for all levels of power in Belgium. Indeed, it is crucial to be able to have good-quality data available to build useful indicators. Priority should particularly be given to data on health matters, including environmental health, and transport.

5. Increase society's consensus on the policies to follow

by encouraging debates based on the objectives and indicators that emerge from integrated forward-looking exercises. Indeed, debates in society on sustainable development visions increase the chances of social consensus on the policies implemented and on possible synergies during their implementation.

The Federal Report on Sustainable Development studied several **strongly synthetic indicators** and formulated the following **five recommendations** in connection with these indicators.

6. Include the public debt in the sustainable development indicators.

As a country's public debt does not generally appear in the aggregate synthetic indicators proposed by the sustainable development actors for evaluating the situation, the Federal Report on sustainable development recommends that it is included in these systematically, as are some categories of public revenues or expenditures. This is in order to evaluate quantitatively the progress achieved in the sustainability of the public finances, in accordance with article 7bis of the Belgian Constitution: *"In the exercise of their respective competences, the Federal State, the Communities and the Regions pursue the objectives of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental aspects, taking into account the solidarity between the generations"*.

7. Anticipate the entry into force of the European legal basis for the environmental satellite accounts.

The environmental satellite accounts and their aggregate indicators play an essential role in measuring the interdependence of economic and environmental aspects in a country's production and consumption. Therefore, the Federal Report on Sustainable Development recommends anticipating the entry into force of the European legal basis for the environmental satellite accounts. This basis is expected to make the Member States regularly publish some of the environmental satellite accounts (air emissions, expenditure on environmental protection, materials flows, environmental taxes).

8. Provide sufficient administrative resources for monitoring the execution of the plans.

The synthetic indicators on the implementation of the Federal Plans for Sustainable Development that were established by the *Act of 5 May 1997 on the Co-ordination of Federal Sustainable Development Policy* are indispensable to the monitoring of the execution of these Plans. Therefore, the Federal Report on Sustainable Development recommends that sufficient administrative resources are clearly allocated to this monitoring and also that systematic communication with the general public on this subject is ensured.

9. More regularly provide input into the database of the FAO

(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). The ecological footprint and biological capacity are the aggregate synthetic indicators of the use that an individual or a country makes of the planet's natural resources, expressed in physical units. They are calculated by the Global Footprint Network on the basis of data from international organisations. Therefore, the Federal Report on Sustainable Development recommends that Belgium provides input into the FAO database on a more regular basis so that the Global Footprint Network's calculation better reflects the true situation.

10. Take into account other synthetic indicators.

The human development index is a composite synthetic indicator of the living standard, health and educational aspects of a country's development. Therefore, the Federal Report on Sustainable Development recommends that other synthetic indicators are taken into account, reflecting other social aspects of long-term sustainable development visions, such as the social effects of pressures exerted by a country's production and consumption, or the fairness of the distribution of the planet's resources within and between countries.

Acronyms

BC	Biological Capacity
BMI	Body Mass Index
EF	Ecological Footprint
ESA	Environmental Satellite Accounts
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FCSD	Federal Council for Sustainable Development
FPB	Federal Planning Bureau
GDI	Gross Domestic Income
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
gha	global hectare
GHG	Greenhouse gases
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
ICSD	Interdepartmental Commission on Sustainable Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SD	Sustainable development
SDIs	Sustainable development indicators
SSDOs	Strategic sustainable development objectives
TFSD	Task Force on Sustainable Development
TransGovern	Transformation of living conditions through governing
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

**Would you like to know more?
Several options are available to you.**

The full text of the *Federal Report on Sustainable Development 2009* is only available in French and Dutch. It can be downloaded from <http://sustdev.plan.be>. You can also order a paper copy of the Report from the same site.

If you wish, the Federal Planning Bureau can send you a copy of the first four Reports (in French and Dutch) on a CD-ROM that also contains other Belgian and international reference documents on sustainable development (in French, Dutch, German and English, if available).

You can request all of these documents by e-mail at sustdev@plan.be or by telephone on +32 2 507 74 82.



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Sustainable Development Indicators, Objectives and Visions

Belgian Federal Report on Sustainable Development 2009 A brief presentation

The Belgian Federal Reports on Sustainable Development were established by the *Act of 5 May 1997 on the Co-ordination of Federal Sustainable Development Policy*. Therefore the Reports fit into the Belgian Federal Sustainable Development Strategy cycle. This cycle consists of a succession of reporting, planning, consultation, implementation and monitoring. Successive cycles of these stages should lead to improvements in policy-making. Within this strategy, the Reports have the mission of analysing and assessing both the present situation and the policies conducted. The other mission of the Reports is to describe the expected development within long-term scenarios.

The Act commissioned the Belgian Federal Planning Bureau (FPB) to draw up the Report. The FPB is a public agency that carries out studies and makes projections on economic, social and environmental policy issues and on their integration within the context of sustainable development. The Task Force on Sustainable Development (TFSD) is the FPB team that, among other tasks, draws up the Reports under the direction and responsibility of the FPB. So far, Reports have been published in 1999, 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

The 5th Federal Report on Sustainable Development, entitled *Sustainable Development Indicators, Objectives and Visions*, contributes to the debate on instruments for measuring the development of societies. The Report presents a large structured set of 88 indicators and a reduced set of 18 indicators that reflects policy priorities. The Report also discusses some strongly synthetic indicators, such as the Ecological Footprint and the Human Development Index. Based on its analysis, the Report formulates ten recommendations on tools for measuring progress.

This brochure presents the 5th Federal Report on Sustainable Development.