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**NOTE**

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Subject : Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)  
- Compilation of written replies by delegations

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Delegations will find attached a compilation of replies received from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom and Bulgaria to the questions set out in document 9510/06.

## ESTONIA

### General opinion

- The connection between EU Strategy for Sustainable Development and Lisbon agenda should be clearly specified. Sector strategies at EU and national level should take into account the guiding principles of the Sustainable Development Strategy.
- We consider it very important for the wording of the objectives arising from previous council and European Council decisions to follow the previously agreed wording. Indicative and binding targets should be clearly differentiated.
- Estonia does not support the extra-administrative burden arising from the reporting obligation set by the Sustainable Development Strategy.

### Question 1

From the public health point of view, the proposed objectives, targets, key actions and policy measures are appropriate to promote the sustainable development. However, it is important to note that the health status in the new Member States differs considerably from that in the old Member States, in terms of overall health status (health gap) but also in terms of morbidity and mortality. In the new Member States the premature death rate is dominated by cardiovascular diseases and external causes, like injuries. There is also a higher childhood mortality rate and much lower social cohesion. This brings us to believe that it would be appropriate to have sustainable development measures which are targeted on the prevention of traumas and injuries, and on the creation of the safe living environment for the whole population, especially children. Measures to increase social cohesion would considerably help to improve the health status of the population. We note that Estonia is currently developing its national health policy document which will serve as a basis for a comprehensive health strategy and will include many essential elements of the sustainable development.

## **Question 2**

The best way to improve the health of population would be for governments at all levels to invest into health and the infrastructure supporting it. A clear prioritisation of health in the political agenda and taking health into account in other policies is necessary. In order to obtain synergy and coherence across policies inter-sectoral co-operation as well as co-operation at governmental level and between the government, private sector, civil society and citizens is needed.

## **Question 3**

Every decision (political, economic etc) has an impact on the health of population, therefore every decision-maker at every level and in every sector should take responsibility for the development of its own and population health. A targeted and effective use of resources is important. The EU could contribute to the sustainable development at both the EU and global level by defining evidence based measures in the area of public health, taking into account the major public health challenges. The EU should also play a leading role in setting the international public health agenda and in developing policy measures to tackle the common public health challenges.

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**FINLAND**

Finland is satisfied that Austria has included sustainable development on the agenda of the Council of Health Ministers.

The objectives of public health and health promotion and the objectives of sustainable development are closely linked. Sustainable development which leads to a conflict with the objectives of health promotion and protection is not conceivable.

Hence, health is one of the cornerstones of sustainable development. Continuous attention to health and welfare aspects in administrative activities has a positive impact on the preconditions for health, the determinants of health. Consequently this will reflect on the health of the population with a time lag. The changes achieved in health status will improve the containment of healthcare costs as well.

The determinants of health and of social cohesion often remain outside the scope of social and health care activities, which is also true for possible valid policy measures. Thus, it is important to ensure that social and health aspects are taken into account in decision making in any other policy areas. Using social and health impact assessments offers an appropriate method for work. Focused policy helps us to achieve the Lisbon Strategy and sustainable development goals by increasing the well-being of the population and improving its health.

To conclude, setting out guidelines and decision making promoting citizens' health and well-being in all EU policies is the best way to supports sustainable development.

**GERMANY**

**Question 1**

- (a) The Federal Government supports the six priorities proposed by the Commission (climate change and clean energy, public health, social exclusion/demography/migration, management of natural resources, sustainable transport, poverty and development), which are in line with the position taken by the Federal Government during the 2004 consultation exercise.
- (b) The inclusion of a new priority area, the sustainable development of public health, is especially welcome. Health was not included at the beginning of these discussions, when the focus was mainly on environment and climate change.
- (c) The Commission proposals contain some good ideas, but do not go far enough in terms of public health. Our criticism would be that the material in the communication and in the relevant section of Annex 2 merely serves to prioritise a selection of individual health policy measures which already form part of general European health policy. There is no operational approach to integrating elements from other policy areas affected by sustainable development. In terms of health policy, this is more a snapshot of existing measures than an attempt to integrate health matters into a consistent overall strategy.

## Question 2

- (a) For the sake of consistency, there should be some reference to the sustainable provision of health care and long-term care under the OMC<sup>1</sup>.
- (b) There is an added value in the EU sustainability strategy in that the priority areas are interlinked, so that synergies emerge over and above the specialist sector-specific view and approaches can be developed accordingly. The Commission communication fails to make these links. To promote the integrative approach to a coherent sustainable common strategy, specific interfaces should be introduced between public health and policy areas such as worker protection (e.g. smoking), social policy (OMC), industry and the environment (clothing and furnishing materials, etc. which may pose a health risk), transport (e.g. noise and air quality), research and development (biogenetics, tissue engineering, etc.) and education and training (active health prevention) as well as other policy areas (e.g. agricultural policy and animal health).

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<sup>1</sup> See the Commission communication on a new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the EU, 22.12.2005, COM (2005) 706.

### Question 3:

- (a) In the German government's view, the Commission's recommendation that national strategies be reviewed in the light of the EU strategy will lead to greater consistency between the two levels. However, this process should not amount to a duty to harmonise national strategies. In addition, as regards public health, it is essential to ensure that the Community does not become drawn into regulating health policy matters because they are related to the other priority areas, where the Commission is not explicitly empowered to act.
- (b) EU-level public health measures such as action to promote healthy eating, the strategies on alcohol and drugs, the action programme on health and consumer protection and medicinal products should be linked with those being taken nationally. They also need to be coordinated with the programmes and recommendations of international organisations (especially the WHO, the Council of Europe, the OECD and UNESCO, etc.).
- (c) In particular, the indicators set out in the sustainability strategy need to be constantly aligned on the OMC indicators, to avoid duplication and misunderstandings and obviate the need for additional reporting requirements.
- (d) As regards integration of the global dimension, we welcome the Commission's intention to step up efforts to implement the action programme against HIV/AIDS in third countries. However, there are no specific links to the Africa strategy (HIV/AIDS/tuberculosis), pandemics, infectious diseases and migration, etc.

## **GREECE**

### **Question 1**

A wide multi-scope approach should be applied in the process to achieve those targets regarding public health. This approach should take into consideration the relationships to a great variety of different sectors (way of life, environmental conditions, nutrition etc).

Considerable emphasis should be placed on preventive policies as well as on the application of Public Health policies. Several key aspects should be underlined herein, among them the importance of implementing Environmental Technologies and Sanitary Engineering processes in order to protect the human health.

### **Question 2**

- a) We agree with the proposal of suitable indicators, provided that the special features of each country have been adequately considered.
- b) The necessary actions should not be limited only to the application of economical tools (pollutant pay principle). It is recommended that they are undertaken in a framework of multidisciplinary.
- c) We consider as a very important tool the procedure of "Health impact assessment". The risk analysis should not be based only on a cost-benefit analysis, but on the implementation of multicriteria analysis, which takes into account all the critical factors related to the sustainable development.



### Question 3

We believe that the most effective tool in this direction could be the endorsement of commonly accepted Specifications and Regulations by all Member-States in the direction of protecting human health.

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## HUNGARY

### Question 1

Hungary welcomes having public health included as a priority area in the Sustainable Development Strategy Review Package. We firmly believe that the tools of public health policy can play an effective role in evolving a European model in which economic growth, social well-being, quality of life and the environment mutually support one another, and one which is able to meet the challenges of a changing world. We see the strategy as a concrete tool for turning public health into a defining factor within it.

For this reason, we also consider it important that the Ministers of Health be able to make substantive contributions to finalizing the strategy at the EPSCO meeting. We feel that if public health is to play a defining role in sustainable development above and beyond the classical public health approach (management of epidemics and improving protection against health threats, preparing for and handling possible epidemics pandemics, prevention) we need a broader definition of the concept of public health; as there is no economic development without a healthy population, and, consequently, a healthy workforce. Even more, in this context we would like to emphasize the role of efficient and modern health care systems.

We agree with the targets and measures of the SDS Review Package and with the tools defined for the various areas, but in accordance with the above we also think that there should be particular emphasis on tools that act as incentives towards good health and on the factors determining health. In an accelerated and changing world, we think it particularly important to support measures and strategies that halt the spread of and prevent lifestyle-related disorders. On long term, health protection and preventive efforts will be able to reduce disease and the economic and social burden of time spent off the job.

We need an integrated multi-sectoral approach to attain these goals. The high-standard implementation of school health promotion can be one of the most effective tools employed to attain public health goals and to increase the working ability and labour market capacity of the next generation. This includes regular professional level health promotion with all students in public schools as a part of the effort which includes education towards respecting the environment, towards being an educated consumer, towards accident prevention, towards using the media, and towards mental health. Teaching health promotion in higher and adult education can also contribute to attaining the targeted public health goals.

We also would propose to make a reference to the importance of operating effective and modern health care systems which are able, on the one hand, to cope with the growing demand of the ageing population, and on the other hand, to contribute to maintain or restore the good health of the population, including the workforce.

## **Question 2**

The SDS Review correctly concluded that the trends are closely interrelated and therefore, management of each individual problem requires the comprehensive, integrated approach of all sectoral policies and an in-depth survey of the points of connection. Therefore, to attain visible results and measurable progress, we consider it very important to increase efforts to survey how professional policy connects to all significant new political initiatives and to prepare health impact assessment. We think it is vital for it to become a general standard to base operations on the results of these studies.

### Question 3

Hungary believes that EU efforts shall be combined with effective measures regarding both neighbouring countries and the global level. We believe that by specifying guiding principles, targets and key activities, the internal areas of professional policy become equipped with a system of tools that can serve as the point of reference for further-shaping professional policies, and for designing international efforts and supporting commitments. Growing global challenges make up the significant portion of the phenomena addressed by the strategy and an ambitious community Sustainable Development Strategy can also provide guiding principles for global-level problem management.

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**ITALY**

Italy wishes to thank the Presidency and the Commission for the major effort made in dealing with the fundamental issue of sustainable development and for the overall approach adopted. Italy considers that in general the document under discussion is a good starting-point.

Concerning health issues in particular, Italy would additionally like the concept of joint commitment to the pursuit of a high level of health for all, both among the Member States and within each State, to be made clear in express terms in the overall objective.

Concerning the operational objectives and targets, Italy would also like the following objective to be added:

"To promote the availability and accessibility of innovative medicinal products and the best use of medicinal products by means which include directly informing the patient about medicines, diseases and the possible alternative treatments available."

Furthermore, Italy would also very much like to see an amendment to the first objective concerning "curbing the increase in preventable lifestyle diseases" by the addition of "particularly through reinforcement and improvement of primary and secondary prevention" at the end of the sentence:

The same applies to the last operational objective, i.e. "to improve information on environmental pollution and adverse health impacts", which we would like to amend as follows: "To improve information and minimise the impact on health of environmental pollution and other environmental risk factors".

Concerning the examples of actions listed in the document for the Council to examine, Italy's view is that they are interesting but at the same time incomplete and should rather be considered within the overall context of a programme to be defined more precisely in the course of discussions, so that all aspects relevant to the various operational objectives can be taken into consideration.

We would point out that health promotion can play a major part in releasing resources for development, providing appropriate responses to the demands arising from chronic disease, disability and the ageing of the population, and *inter alia* in relieving women of their traditional tasks of caring for vulnerable family members, thereby also promoting equal opportunity. It is therefore very important to further increase investment in health in order to mobilise all the latent resources in our national systems.

The Council of Ministers for Health, in concert with appropriate Commission initiatives, can provide continuity in the discussion of the relationship between health and economic development, providing a forum for exchanging experiences in the use of health impact assessment methods, for the purpose *inter alia* of greater dissemination. This could improve the synergies and consistency between national policies, encourage phases of joint discussion - both between Member States and between those with official responsibility - in a process which, beginning with decision-takers at European level, would engage with national and regional operational realities. Discussion of "other" policies and additional work on indicators measuring the effects of policies on health could make for a higher level of cohesion between European States and allow health protection capacities to be tested within a perspective of "rights of citizenship" and of guaranteeing an essential service which is a preliminary to economic development and a driving force for progress. All of this could lead to the creation of a unique European model of sustainable development which could be shared with countries outside the EU, so enabling the adoption of inclusive and environmentally sensitive development policies.

Finally it is important that the EU should continue with the greatest determination to pursue the policy of not transferring consumer goods to third countries where these would be considered unacceptable or harmful in Europe. The European Union should also continue and further develop systematic and constructive forms of cooperation to help developing third countries to improve their health conditions.

**LATVIA****Question 1**

Latvia considers the objectives, targets, key actions and the implied mix of policy instruments proposed in the SDS Review package as appropriate and sufficient. We would like to remark that it is crucial to find appropriate balance among all policy areas when the priorities are defined. In order to achieve the aims of SDS Review package it is necessary to establish a time frame within which the key actions must be completed bearing in mind that it is very important to set up reasonable time limits and goals.

The objectives and key actions of the SDS Review package in the area of health are indispensable for tackling problems which at the EU level are recognized as important. It is very important to recognize that development of EU very much depends on EU populations' life quality which includes public health aspects and health care.

**Question 2**

Each Council formation must focus on issues of its' competence at the same time taking into account that all sectors are interconnected and this connection must not be neglected. Clear definition of EU and national financial resources for realization of key actions is also very important.

Commission may be invited to control the fulfilment of key actions and to prepare progress reports for the Council.

### Question 3

In implementing the EU SDS it is very important to take into account EU enlargement and peculiarities of social and economic conditions in member states.

The aims and key actions of the EU SDS are coherent with those of the international organizations, e.g. WHO also has defined healthy life styles, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular diseases, influenza pandemic as priorities. By implementing the EU SDS member states serve as an example of best practice to other regions of the world.

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## **SLOVAKIA**

### **Question 1**

#### **Key objectives**

Environmental protection: Reference to health impact on population of the environment as the key health determinant could be mentioned.

Economic prosperity: We find appropriate to mention development of health sector as the significant power for the economic prosperity.

#### **Policy guiding principles**

Promotion and protection of fundamental rights: We suggest reference to right for health in connection with access to appropriate health services as the principle that should not be omitted.

Solidarity within and between generation: Reference to the ageing population and vulnerable groups could be useful.

Involvement of citizens: We propose text on increasing public awareness of the responsibility of the citizens for their own health.

Involvement of business and social partners: As the recent development in the field of antivirals supply has shown, private - public partnership is important for providing health protection for the citizens. This fact should be somehow reflected in the text of the paragraph.

Policy integration: We propose following text: “Promote integration of economic, social, health and environmental consideration ...”

Use best available knowledge: The proposed text should point to the treatment of diseases, especially rare diseases.

Making use of synergies between the EU SDS and the strategy for growth and jobs.

Under this heading we propose reference to synergy between different health systems within the EU for the purpose of providing instruments ensuring appropriate access to health services within all territory of the EU for all its citizens with the view of mobility of professionals.

### **Public health**

We find the overall objective as satisfactory. Nevertheless we think the approach to the formulation of the operational objectives and targets should include more vision oriented objectives. It seems that the latest development concerning new reality in the health related sectors are not achieved satisfactory. In the text only new health threat are taken into account. We would suggest to consider health circumstances of enlarged Europe, science development, use of new technologies for treatment in connection with high quality of health care and increase of efficiency of treatment using best practices. Reference to mental health is definitely missing. Referring to the food legislation promotion of healthy food and drinks consumption would be useful.

In the part of examples for actions, open method of coordination should be added. The note of integrating health into other policies would be possible.

### **Social exclusion, demography and migration**

With regard to the third countries we would suggest protection of the EU citizens from transmissible diseases by implementing relevant provisions on migration of International Health Regulations. With regard to reference to ageing population integration of social and health services could be welcomed solution.

## **Global poverty and development challenges**

Many diseases such as TBC, HIV/AIDS arise directly from poverty. Combating poverty involves elimination of these diseases. Reference to this connection could be added.

## **Education and training**

Under this heading health education of children and teenagers could be added. Reproductive health, promotion of healthy lifestyles together with stressing impact of unhealthy food, smoking and irresponsible behaviour on human health and life could contribute to health of young generation. Future challenges of ageing population, growth of obesity especially in the children population would demand special targeted training of health professionals.

## **Research and development**

In this chapter we would like to propose less general approach. Special reference to research in the area of diseases that cannot be treated today, such as HIV/AIDS, some forms of cancer could be mentioned, as well as new emerging infectious diseases (avian influenza) or rare diseases. Development of the new technologies are necessary.

## **Financing and economic**

Sustainable development of the health systems should be referred to under this heading.

## **Implementation, monitoring and follow - up**

We propose a slight textual change on the page 22, paragraph 33, 7<sup>th</sup> line: ” ...such as climate change, energy efficiency, ageing and social cohesion and health status.”

## **Question 2**

Council of the health ministers can contribute by implementing policy, that aims at the continuous improvement of the quality of life of European citizens by means of ensuring good health status of EU population. We find two years period for submitting country progress report rather short. We doubt, if this period would be appropriate for visible improvement.

## **Question 3**

EU SDS should contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens by implementing citizens friendly policy in all areas of life. From the health point of view EU SDS should protect citizens from existing health threats as well as from the new emerging diseases. In the new strategy health should be treated as the basic building block for development of all the other policies. At the global level EU SDS should cooperate with the third countries on bilateral and international level, particularly WHO, on improvement of health as complete physical, mental and social well-being.

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## **SLOVENIA**

### **Question 1**

Slovenia welcomes the process of reviewing the EU strategy for sustainable development and in particular the inclusion of public health goals in the document. There is growing evidence that health contributes to wealth and that ill health contributes to absenteeism, social exclusion and causes costs not just for individuals but also for the society as a whole. However, besides the issues of communicable diseases, health threats and environmental factors, the prevention and health promotion policies which tackle main health determinants should be highlighted to a greater extent in the document.

### **Question 2**

Since some health indicators are sensitive for measuring the level of sustainable development, we believe that the Healthy Life Years indicator is appropriate to be the indicator of measurable progress in implementing the EU SDS.

In order to achieve synergies between all EU policies in terms of achieving the goals of the sustainable development strategy Slovenia feels that more emphasise should be put on integration of health aspects in all EU policies and their impacts on health.

### **Question 3**

Issues in public health, like HIV pandemic and global threats such as communicable diseases, to mention just few of them, must be tackled within the EU and globally. Close cooperation between member states and with global international organizations and other partners will ensure coherence and achievements of goals.

**SWEDEN****Question 1**

From a public health perspective, the Commission communication for a revised Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) addressed all the key elements essential for a modern view of public health, i.e. it addressed life style issues as well as the social determinants of health and aspects of inequity in health. For Sweden its essential that this perspective is kept through the forthcoming discussions.

For many years traditional public health approaches focused on actions to improve health by a disease oriented risk factor approach. This approach looked at the social, behavioural and biomedical causes of morbidity and mortality. Recent work, however, has been highlighting the inadequacy of this foundation for policy and action in the promotion of health and prevention of disease. The question was asked as to why all of the then known risk factors, combined, accounted for less than half of the diseases that occurred. It was obvious that one or more crucial risk factors had been overlooked. Based on interdisciplinary research over the past decade it is now suggested that a great majority of preventable morbidity and mortality are located neither within individual sphere, nor in the domains of individual behaviour, lifestyle or 'risk', but within the social organisation of a society. One example is the different trends in health for men and women, which can be related to different conditions in life. It is therefore of outmost importance that our work with the SDS continues to be progressive and follows the recognised understanding of what determines the health of a population. The EU has been a strong advocate in the movement and should continue to show the way forward.

Another important issue is the handling of chemicals and pesticides.

A strong REACH chemicals policy should soon be in place in order to reach the target by 2020. Public health should be improved by avoiding and preventing the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides by replacing them with safer alternatives.

## Question 2 & 3

A successful sustainable development strategy needs a strong integrated approach. This in turn, requires a solid understanding and commitment to take account of health in all policy areas. There are several ways of implementing such an approach. First, it will be important to increase and improve a systematic and structured cooperation between the EU member states in the area of public health. This is essential in order for public health to achieve greater attention and to be placed higher on the political agenda. Second, it is vital to find concrete mechanisms for how to mainstream health aspects in all policy areas. To achieve real synergies the issue at hand needs not only to be addressed in general debates but also in clear political commitments. In terms of practical tools, to achieve these goals one instrument is the EU Commission's Impact Assessment procedure. However, this procedure is still in its initial phases and health aspects need to become much more visible and perceived as an important aspect. It will be important to clearly demonstrate the “win-win” aspects of integrating health in other policy areas. An excellent argument for this is the connection between health and economic growth in the sustainable development agenda.

The most common view of the relationship between economic development and health is that health will improve as a result of economic growth. This is true in the sense that public policy (including economic growth) has led to improved living and working conditions for large numbers of people and significant years have been added to life. However, the opposite is also true: improved health is vital to economic development. A healthy population creates conditions for prosperity and economic growth through less sick leave, increased employment, increased productivity and less need for healthcare. Thus, health is a key factor in determining economic growth and key for a sustainable development. Investment in the development of health systems and in the production of global public goods for health makes indeed a major contribution to economic growth and to social cohesion. With this a background, it will become easier to gain political commitment and general understanding to why investments in health need to be more systematic and structured. And that such a cooperation, across the EU, will be paramount in creating a sustainable development from every possible aspect.

When the EU successfully mainstreams health into other policy areas, when we efficiently address the social determinants of health, and when we have a reinforced systematic and structured cooperation regarding health across the EU, this will also be reflected in the EU's international commitments.

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**UNITED KINGDOM****Question 1****Objectives**

The UK considers a single, coherent EU SDS needs to be soundly based on the Declaration of Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development agreed by European Council in June 2005. The key objectives of the Declaration – environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity, and meeting our international responsibilities – should be included as the overriding objectives of the revised Strategy. The policy guiding principles should form the basis for achieving the actions identified in the Strategy for meeting the key objectives, and it would therefore be logical to include them in the Strategy.

We broadly agree that the six priority issues – climate change, public health, social exclusion and demographic change, natural resources, sustainable transport, and global poverty - are appropriate and sufficient. However, we consider they should be more clearly expressed as objectives, as in Annex 2 to the Communication. For example, as regards natural resources: *“To safeguard the earth’s capacity to support life in all its diversity, respect the limits of the planet’s natural resources and promote sustainable production and consumption to break the link between economic growth and environmental degradation.”* The Friends of the Presidency Group has added a seventh priority - sustainable production and consumption - and we support this move.

The objective relating to global poverty needs to be expressed more widely to include sustainable development issues. For example: *“To actively promote sustainable development worldwide and ensure that the European Union’s internal and external policies are consistent with its commitments for fighting global poverty and promoting global sustainable development.”*

## Targets, key actions, and policy instruments

Annex 2 to the Communication summarises a vast agenda of actual and potential actions related to sustainable development. To that extent, it is more than sufficient, and the UK is particularly concerned that it should be used as a means for clarifying priorities and implementing existing commitments, rather than as a basis for new initiatives.

The UK therefore considers that the revised EU SDS should:

- Focus on improving measurement and delivery of existing priority targets and commitments, rather than on developing new ones, without the introduction of new targets unless properly evaluated.
- Make more explicit the links between sustainable development and human health, in particular focusing on; the role of a healthy population in contributing to economic development; the role of an inclusive society in promoting health and well-being and care for the environment; and the positive health impacts of a well-managed natural environment and a well-planned and maintained built environment.

Prioritise targets and actions according to common criteria, such as EU added value, timeliness, or the scale and urgency of the issue being addressed

We consider the most important priorities with regard to Health Council are:

- Support action to improve protection against health threats by developing capacity to respond to threats in a coordinated manner (with due respect to the relative Competences of the EU and Member States).
- Support action to curb the increase in preventable life-style diseases through health promotion and prevention, and promote action to address the social and economic determinants of health, focusing particularly on tackling health and environmental inequalities.

- Work with other councils to highlight the value of including human health and equity issues appropriately within the scope of impact assessments, to support sustainable development.
- Promote research into the links between environmental pollutants, exposure and health impacts to improve our understanding of what environmental factors cause health problems and how best to prevent them.

## Question 2

The UK sees the following main elements to the Health Council's contribution to the delivery of visible results and measurable progress in implementing the EU SDS:

- Improving protection against health threats by developing capacity to respond in a coordinated manner when appropriate.

An area of particular benefit would be sharing of the scientific information on infection control, mathematical modelling etc so that there is a clear understanding of the evidence base, for example in relation to pandemic flu planning.

- Taking action at EU and MS level on the social and economic determinants of health, and life-style related diseases, particularly focusing on tackling health inequalities within member states.

Tackling health inequalities is a key cross-cutting theme of the EU public health programme, and a major sustainable development issue in terms of social inclusion, social justice and cohesion. Action can be taken through the Commission's Expert Working Group on Social Determinants and Health Inequalities, that provides a forum for the exchange of information on good practice, and an interface between relevant policies, projects and activities at EU level and within countries.

- Taking action to ensure that health is considered in the development of all policies would make a significant difference to health and sustainable development. The council should support the EU Impact Assessment to ensure it continues to appropriately incorporate the health dimension, and MS should consider the value of including human health and equity issues in impact assessments at MS level.
- Promoting action to develop the evidence base to inform policy-making decisions, particularly through the Environment and Health Action Plan.

With other Council formations, it has a shared responsibility for ensuring coherence between economic, environmental and social aspects of Community policies, including through actions on health in all policy areas. It should seek to promote the links between employment, environment, social exclusion and health, and promote health as a key resource for sustainable economic development.

Protecting and promoting population health is vital to a successful economy. With greater coherence across all our policies, we stand a better chance of achieving the prime objective of sustainable development – a continuous improvement of the quality of life on earth for both current and future generations. The SDS should therefore show how jobs, growth and other objectives can be delivered within a sustainable development framework, and how the renewed Lisbon agenda encourages the development of a dynamic economy to support our social and environmental ambitions. To achieve this end, the role of better policy-making, particularly impact assessment, is vital. In particular, balanced impact assessments should remain central throughout the discussion of new legislative proposals and there should be improved arrangements for the early involvement of Member States in Commission impact assessments.

The UK also strongly supports the development of a governance cycle that keeps sustainable development as a live issue following adoption of the revised strategy. We are broadly in favour of all the elements of such a cycle that the Presidency has proposed to the Friends of the Presidency Group, providing the requirements for national reporting are not over prescriptive and make use of existing arrangements. In particular, we are keen that mechanisms for drawing on Member State good practice, for example, peer review, are strengthened, again based on existing arrangements and bodies.

### Question 3

The UK considers there are two key, interrelated, aspects to ensuring coherence between EU internal policies and its international commitments:

- The impact of the EU's internal policies on developing countries, and the near neighbours.
- The delivery of the EU's international commitments under multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) and other instruments and processes.

As regards developing countries, we would like to see the global objectives agreed by the Development Council (May 2002) incorporated into the revised EU SDS, updated according to the key commitments in the EU Consensus on Development agreed in 2005. Specifically, these objectives are: fight poverty; make globalisation work for sustainable development; sustainable consumption and production; reverse environmental degradation; coherence of EU policies (particularly in relation to climate change and health issues); better governance at all levels; and financing for sustainable development.

We also think emphasis should be placed on engaging with rapidly developing countries, such as China, India and Brazil, Mexico and South Africa whose engagement will be vital if we are to deliver on our international objectives in key areas such as natural resource management, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change.

As regards the delivery of international commitments, we attach considerable importance to the EU's action to help deliver the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its WSSD targets and commitments, as well as implementation of the Doha Development Agenda and the UN World Summit Outcome.

It is also important to incorporate the external dimension into the EU's effort for better policy making. In particular, impact assessments should properly account for both internal and external costs and benefits, taking account of consultations with developing countries at the policy formulation stage.

The Health Council has a particular role to play in the following areas in ensuring coherence between EU internal and external policies related to sustainable development:

Promoting close cooperation and collaboration with WHO, across a range of programmes and policy areas. These include the work of the Commission for the Social Determinants of Health, patient safety, the Non-Communicable Disease Strategy, the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, the work in relation to pandemic influenza and emerging health threats, HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, including the implementation of the international health regulations.

With Environment Council, ensuring close linkages are made between the WHO Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe and the EU's Environment and Health Action Plan.

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**BULGARIA**

Bulgaria supports the elaboration of a new EU strategy for sustainable development.

The basic targets and challenges of the Strategy of EU in the field of public health are very well pointed in the presented documents. Thus formulated, they respond to the targets of the strategy. There are covered the basic fields of possible impact as foods and labelling, the threats for the health and the harmful factors that are connected with the way of living. Developing of action priorities responds to the problems of the public health.

The implemented activities have to be performed by integrated approach and inter-section co-operation due to problems sophistication. Very important is the best possible usage of the knowledge and the mobilization of the citizens I different countries. Such an approach could influence the factors that destabilize the sustainable development. An example for this is limitation of appearance and development of diseases caused by behaviour factors.

Bulgaria accepts the 4 basic principals of the sustainable development. The safety of surrounding environment, the social equality and cohesion, the economic prosperity and the fulfilment of the international responsibilities are the corner-stones in this development. We accept the exposed leading principals of the Strategy for sustainable development because the behaviours of the separate citizens have to be supported by targeted and clear-sighted coherent policy and management of the problems. The integration of the management policies is a leading principal that we completely support. The safety of the surrounding environment and the measures against the violators are also important principal of the strategy.

We find appropriate the formulation for supplementation of the ESSD and the Lisbon's strategy. The growth and employment as a basic focus for strengthening of the economy and creation of working places in a middle-termed plan and the actions aimed towards quality of life, the equality of rights between generations and the coherence between different fields of policies have a common aim – the progress of the society in common direction. We find necessary to point out the necessity of investments in the public and social capital, especially in countries that are of a need of more investments in the field of technological innovations, in order to respond the requirements for long-term compatibility and economic prosperity.

We agree with the necessity of co-operation between the member-countries for the achievement of the placed ambitious targets of the Strategy. We are particularly satisfied from the inclusion of the “precautionary principal” as leading political principal in countries' efforts, aimed towards the protection of the public health and reduction of the harmful effects upon health, which are caused by surrounding environment factors. As well as from the necessity of application of measures, especially targeted towards vulnerable groups from the population and on first place the infants. Simultaneously we propose an increase of the accent towards policies in the public health. The human capital and its health can be put on the first places of this strategy.

