



# STAKEHOLDER

Newsletter N°2 of ECO, The Malta Ecological Foundation on EU Accession and the Environment

## Intro

STAKEHOLDER forms part of a project on EU enlargement and the environment that is being organised in all twelve applicant states, and is called "Towards Information, Integration and Implementation in EU Accession".

To date, a survey was conducted among Maltese NGOs to assess the need for this project, the results of which were published in the first newsletter.

Besides, with the guidance of various experts, the Maltese NGOs started the process of discussing the first three themes: transport, energy and waste, in order to produce a position paper on each theme and use it as the backbone of this lobbying process.

Furthermore, ECO has commissioned experts to draw up a detailed report on two case studies that will be included in the next issue of Stakeholder.

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## Swedish EU presidency promises Green Action

The three priorities of the Sweden presidency seem promising: **Environmental issues, Employment and EU Enlargement**. Furthermore, the government's list of environmental goals is formidable and if accomplished it would represent a memorable EU policymaking achievement.

Perhaps the most daunting task for Swedish environment minister Kjell Larsson will be to reignite transatlantic talks on the future of the Kyoto protocol in the hope of securing a formal global accord in early summer. Discussions broke down in the Hague in November when the EU and US-led umbrella group clashed over fundamental policy questions. Attempts to resuscitate the process in the run-up to Christmas led nowhere.

The debacle further swelled Sweden's already ambitious work programme for its six-months chairing EU governmental meetings. True to its reputation for meticulous transparency, Sweden has already published draft agendas for Environment Council meetings in March and June. These set out its hope of reaching agreement on no fewer than seven new EU environmental laws, with a possible eighth listed for good measure.

Presidencies are increasingly judged by the number of "common positions" they reach, and meeting this goal would set it far ahead of recent incumbents, which have achieved no more than two or three - though the outgoing French presidency did have major EU treaty revision and global climate conferences to prepare for.

The laws targeted by Sweden concern electronic equipment, on which little progress was made during the French presidency because of delays in the European Parliament; emissions from two- and three-wheeled vehicles, light-duty vehicles and pleasure boats; access to environmental information; and the list of substances earmarked for priority action under the new water framework directive.

The government also expects to achieve agreement on a new 10-year environmental action programme for the EU, before launching an EU sustainable development strategy at the Gothenburg summit in June (more on this in this issue of Stakeholder).

If all goes well, even this already packed agenda should not divert Sweden from its two favourite environmental themes: integrated product policy (IPP) and chemicals. Internal Commission delays over IPP may prevent any meaningful debate under Sweden's presidency, but hopefully it will be able to get its teeth into a white paper on a new EU chemicals strategy.

The presidency declares that it will push for a set of very strong "council conclusions" to direct the Commission in drafting new legislation to implement the strategy. Speaking recently Mr Larsson said it was

"high time for the EU to progress to a modern system of regulation with a stronger demand on industry to carry out risk assessments, more burden of proof on industry, and [a stronger mandate] to phase out bio accumulative and persistent chemicals than we have now."

A recent European Court Judgement endorsing Sweden's stricter national system of chemicals regulation will only bolster its case.

Finally, Sweden will host an informal gathering of environment ministers and officials at Kiruna in the far north of Sweden in a bid to reemphasise the "northern dimension" of EU policy and to highlight the fact that modern environmental problems such as chemical contamination affect remote areas removed from main pollution sources.

Swedish EU permanent representation

Tel: +32 2 289 56 11

Swedish presidency website <http://www.eu2001.se>

Policy programme [http://www.eu2001.se/static/pdf/program/ordfprogram\\_eng.pdf](http://www.eu2001.se/static/pdf/program/ordfprogram_eng.pdf)

Draft agendas for Environment Council meetings of:

8 March: [http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news\\_read.asp?iInformation\\_ID=10524](http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news_read.asp?iInformation_ID=10524)

7-8 June: [http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news\\_read.asp?iInformation\\_ID=10525](http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news_read.asp?iInformation_ID=10525)



## TEN TESTS for the Swedish Presidency

This article is part of the European Environmental Bureau's Memorandum to the Swedish Presidency of the European Union. It gives an overview of the expectations and requests of the EEB for the coming six months starting with the 10 main priorities, 10 green tests for the Swedish Presidency. At the end of the six months, performance of the EU during the Swedish Presidency will be evaluated, in particular with regard to these 10 tests.

### Test 1 - Sustainable Development Strategy

- Promote intensive public debate on Commission proposal
- An ambitious strategy adopted in Gothenburg, securing ambitious environmental targets and timetables coherent with social and economic objectives
- A clear sign of responsibility of the EU for sustainable development globally
- Clear support for essential instruments including financial measures
- Clarity about the responsibilities and timetable for the follow up.

### Test 2 - An ambitious 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme

- With clear targets and timetables
- Deals with both the supply and the demand side
- Leads the world in resource efficiency
- Secures a pro-active role of the EU as legislator, to give clear signals to industry
- Includes concrete steps to strengthen the role of environmental citizens' organisations.

### Test 3 - Europe of the Citizens

- Follow the EP in opinion on "Access to Documents", without following its proposals on "informal information" and categorisation of levels of secrecy
- Adopt the Access to Environmental Info Directive with Commission draft as bottom line
- Revision of all relevant Directives on Public Participation requirement of Aarhus Convention
- Initiative for Access to Justice on EU level.

### Test 4 - Enlargement

- Ensure high environmental profile in negotiations
- Increase EU support for building environmental administrative capacity in accession countries
- Organise public discussion on enlargement in Environmental Council.

## Test 5 - Climate Change and Air Pollution

- Not give in to pressure to compromise the position taken in The Hague
- Take significant measures (technical and financial) to limit increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in all forms of transportation, including air transport
- Provide competitive advantage to rail over road freight transport
- Strengthen market position of electricity from renewable energy resources
- Decisions on National Emission Ceilings, Large Combustion Plants and Ozone on the basis of first readings in EP
- An initiative of "like-minded countries" to embark on substantial environmental tax reform to provoke such a process inside EU

## Test 6 - Chemicals Policy

Agree on policy that includes the following five principles:

1. A full right to know, including what chemicals are present in products
2. A deadline by which all chemicals on the market must have had their safety independently assessed. All uses of a chemical should be approved and should be demonstrated to be safe beyond reasonable doubt
3. A phase out of persistent or bio accumulative chemicals
4. A requirement to substitute less safe chemicals with safer alternatives
5. A commitment to stop all releases to the environment of hazardous substances by 2020

## Test 7 - GMOs

No lifting of "moratorium" on GMOs until traceability, labelling and environmental liability are implemented.

## Test 8 - Greening Standardisation

Initiate Strategy for integration of environmental aspects in standardisation to introduce sustainability into "new approach". Include sufficient support for environmental citizens' organisations to take part in standardisation process.

## Test 9 - Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)

Work towards Directives on WEEE and Restriction of certain use of Hazardous Substances in EEE based on and including:

- Immediate, Individual Producer responsibility for future waste
- Collective responsibility for historical waste within 3 years.
- Legally binding collection, reuse and recycling targets, and provisions for update and review.
- Phase out of heavy metals and all halogenated flame retardants from EEE

## Test 10 - Noise

Adopt requirement for daughter directives, proposed within 18 months. Ensure that action be taken now to develop noise quality objectives as well as packages of measures to achieve them.



## PRESIDENCY CONTACTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Here are the main environmental items, official meetings in Sweden, some international meetings and contacts in the Swedish Ministry of Environment during the Swedish Presidency.

**Sustainable development in the EU.** A strategy is to be adopted at the Göteborg summit in June.

Contact: Jon Kahn, Director, e-mail: [jon.kahn@environment.ministry.se](mailto:jon.kahn@environment.ministry.se)

**The 6<sup>th</sup> environmental action programme** will be the first one to be considered by both the Environment Council and the Parliament under the co-decision procedure.

Contact: Jon Kahn, Director, e-mail: [jon.kahn@environment.ministry.se](mailto:jon.kahn@environment.ministry.se)

**A new strategy on chemicals.** A white paper is being prepared by the Commission.

Contact: Eva Sandberg, Deputy Director.  
e-mail: [eva.sandberg@environment.ministry.se](mailto:eva.sandberg@environment.ministry.se)

**Integrated Product Policy (IPP).** The aim is to reduce the impact of products on health and the environment. The Commission prepares a green paper. Contact: Gunilla Blomquist, Desk Officer, e-mail: [gunilla.blomquist@environment.ministry.se](mailto:gunilla.blomquist@environment.ministry.se)

**Threat of climate change.** The Presidency will concentrate on pursuing negotiations on unresolved issues under the Kyoto protocol within the UN Climate Convention.

Contact: Anders Turesson, Deputy Director  
e-mail: [anders.turesson@environment.ministry.se](mailto:anders.turesson@environment.ministry.se)

**Informal Environment Council,** 30 March-1 April in Kiruna. Contact: Kirsten Mortensen, Deputy Director, e-mail: [kirsten.mortensen@environment.ministry.se](mailto:kirsten.mortensen@environment.ministry.se)

**Seminar on chemicals in products as a source of environmental pollution,** 5-6 April in Falkenberg. Representatives from member states, candidate countries, the Commission, the European Parliament, industry, environment and consumer organisations will meet to discuss chemicals effect on health and the environment as well as the scope for restricting chemicals with certain characteristics.

Contact: Eva Sandberg, Deputy Director.  
e-mail: [eva.sandberg@environment.ministry.se](mailto:eva.sandberg@environment.ministry.se)

**Bridging the Gap**, Conference on Sustainability Research and Sector Integration, 9-11 May in Stockholm.

Contact: Ingvar Andersson, Project Co-ordinator, Swedish EPA.

e-mail: [ingvar.andersson@environ.se](mailto:ingvar.andersson@environ.se) See also <http://www.bridging.environ.se>

**The youth conference on the environment and sustainable development**, 23-27 May in Borgholm. The aim is to enable young people to meet in the preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development ten years after the Rio conference.

Contact: Helena Klingvall, e-mail: [helena.klingvall@lsu.se](mailto:helena.klingvall@lsu.se)

**IMPEL**, 18-20 June 2001 in Falun, meeting with the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of the Environmental Law.

Contact: Inga Birgitta Larsson, Project Co-ordinator, Swedish EPA.

e-mail: [ingabirgitta.larsson@environ.se](mailto:ingabirgitta.larsson@environ.se)

## SWEDENVIRONMENT

### SWEDENVIRONMENT

is a publication including environmental news and views from Sweden, and is published by the Ministry of the Environment of Sweden, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Chemicals Inspectorate in this country.

**Swedenvironment** will highlight current issues on the international environmental agenda and present new information and decisions that might be of interest to professional environmentalists. It will also facilitate the exchange of views and create an opportunity for following the development within the environmental field in Sweden.

**Swedenvironment** is published five times a year on the Internet and in printed form.

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## COMMISSION'S TEN YEAR ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME "LACKS TEETH"

The European Environmental Bureau's (EEB) reaction to the recently published, 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme was one of disappointment. The EEB regretted the absence of clear targets and timetables in most policy fields, therewith repeating the mistake of the previous Programme. While it also saw positive elements, it missed an overall visionary and ambitious tone, a commitment to leadership for making a real difference, relying instead on voluntary co-operation of business.

On the absence of targets in the draft legal text, underpinning the Programme, John Hontelez, Secretary General, said: "Ministers, Parliamentarians, environmental organisations have said for years that the EU's environmental policy must be guided by clear objectives, translated into quantified environmental targets and timetables. These would be the teeth of the Commission towards Member States and business, clarifying the dimension of the mandate to push for ambitious policies that really make a difference. However, the Commission has chosen NOT to ask for such teeth from Council and Parliament. It shows how low the awareness of the seriousness of the environmental problems still is inside the Commission."

The Programme itself, not for formal adoption by the Council and the Parliament, does contain objectives, often rather general and up for multi-interpretation, but few concrete targets and timetables. In one area at least, it even gives up a target that were set in the previous programme. The targets to reduce air-pollution to the "critical loads ecosystems can absorb without damage" and to "safe exposure levels for human beings" are replaced now by the vague objective of "levels that do not give rise to unacceptable impacts on, and risks to, human health and the environment". Hontelez: "such a formulation DOES give rise to endless debates about what is unacceptable. We know industry is very good at that".

The EEB did find several positive points in the Programme. This includes its recognition of the EU's global responsibility, the de-coupling of economic growth from natural resource use and environmental degradation, and four clear priority areas to focus on. It also welcomes the commitment of the Commission to get tougher on violators of EU Environment legislation and to implement the Aarhus Convention rules set for transparency, public participation and access to justice. It is also looking forward to "effective environmental impact assessments of new policy proposals" as promised.

Furthermore it welcomes the plans to promote clean production via public procurement, but it needs to see still whether this will be limited to products only rather than to the entire production process as well. The aim to activate a debate on a strategy on soil protection is very much welcomed.

The EEB wants to see more ambition to promote environmental taxation reform. In some places the Programme foresees specific initiatives, but, according to Hontelez, "The Commission seems not to have bright plans to overcome the resistance of some Member States, backed by powerful companies, who after the Nice Summit can continue to veto EU-environment taxes. Instead it hopes for voluntary co-operation with industry and beauty contests. This will never have the same impact as a taxation system that systematically rewards environmentally responsible behaviour and punishes the opposite, both producers and consumers."

On climate change, the first sector of attention, the EEB welcomed the presentation of the issue and the long term objectives. But it finds the 2020 target of 20-40% for the world at large vague and non-committing for the EU. It welcomes the announcement that the EU intends unilateral action to reduce greenhouse gases from aviation if on a global level, in ICAO, no action is agreed by 2002.

The EEB welcomes the priority of resource efficiency as a multi-purpose environmental policy. But it regrets that the Commission has shied away from an ambitious target here, like a Factor 4 by 2010 and Factor 10 by 2020. Such "teeth" are indispensable to overcome the resistance to the policies needed to make such quantum leaps. It supports the measures proposed in a Thematic Strategy, but wants a clear date by which this Strategy is to be in force.

The EEB is concerned that the proposed waste policy, while having positive elements like producer responsibility and focus on prevention, is in fact preparing for a larger role of incineration (called "energy recovery").

The EEB finds too little recognition of the likelihood that in the next 10 years a large number of Central and Eastern European countries will join. Exception is agriculture, but the Commission is much too optimistic that damage can be prevented within the framework of the current Common Agriculture Policy. The enormous opportunities and threats in the energy and transport sectors as well as biodiversity lead to few specific actions in the Programme.

The EEB also notes that an initial proposal to have a systematic integration of environmental objectives in the use of EU's financial operations has not reached the finish. Another telling example on how certain Commissioners want to keep their room for manoeuvring, even if this damages the environment.

Finally, the Programme also mentions a number of areas where concrete proposals are in the pipeline for several years already. This includes environmental liability, review of the Chemicals policy and a new strategy on air pollution. Hontelez: "while the descriptions confirm a positive attitude, the proof is in the pudding".



## Demands on Civil Protection - Malta EU Information Centre

"The environment has no frontiers " a phrase that makes people stop and think. A phrase that made the European governments opt for a serious environmental policy, one which today is becoming extremely important for all.

Within the European continent, natural disasters have had serious effects on the whole society in many European countries, be them EU Member States, applicant countries or just European nations. Practical experience clearly indicates that environmental risks are threatening the modern society. Fires pose a substantial threat and technological risks are growing by the minute. The protection of persons, environment and property from such risks is a general obligation for governments and a challenge for Civil Protection.

This past decade, the EU has recognised the need to accept the existence of a more extensive scope for Civil Protection. Accidents that have not been foreseeable or situations where sufficient preparedness measures have not been undertaken will occur - if not yesterday or today, the time may be tomorrow. In the words of the great Aristotle, it is likely that something unlikely will occur.

The incidents in Europe affecting the environment seriously are well known such as the tankers Amoco Cadiz, the Sea Empress and the very recent Erika, three incidents where several tons of oil were spilt, the Basel chemical accident with its consequences for the Rhine River, the release of a chemical cloud containing dioxins at Seveso and the Chernobyl accidents, the dam incident threatening the Doñana National Park.

Most Member States within the framework of their Civil Protection are redefining their assessments of the environmental risks and accidental threats, or have already done so. The requirements on Civil Protection are being adjusted to meet and correspond to these risks and threats. There is also a general demand to make the public services more efficient by the best available use of resources in society for all serious emergencies.

European cooperation in Civil Protection has been developing since 1985. The aim has been to support and promote action by Member States, the basic objectives being:

- to encourage and offer guidance to national, regional and local efforts in the field of disaster prevention, to offer assistance in the event of a disaster and to help in the training of personnel
- to set up a permanent framework for efficient and rapid cooperation between the Member States in the event of an emergency.

Regular simulation exercises involving different EU Member States are conducted with the support of the Commission to make sure that realistic scenarios are used when testing the effectiveness of emergency procedures.

### Spills at Sea

A Community Action Plan allows Member states to respond more effectively to marine pollution incidents involving spills at sea of harmful substances. The programme also creates the conditions for mutual assistance and effective cooperation by providing joint information systems which could be accessed by national emergency teams; a training programme for personnel involved in emergency situations as well as pilot projects to develop better anti-pollution technology. The Commission and national governments have been involved and cooperated in the response to a number of Marine pollution tanker incidents, the latest within the EU being the Erika incident in December 1999.

### Major-Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances

The Seveso incident gave impetus to having a Council Directive concerning prevention of, preparedness for and response to major accidents involving dangerous substances. Following a fundamental review of this 1982 directive, a new and more stringent directive entered into force merely four years ago. Besides stressing requirements related to safety management systems, land-use planning, emergency planning and information to the public, the latest directive obliges the Member States to report to the Commission all accidents so that the necessary analysis could be done.

### Radiological emergencies

The 1957 EUROATOM Treaty had set out to establish safe conditions to reduce the threat to citizens' lives and health. A directive duly introduced in 1959 was introduced to protect workers and the population at large from the dangers to health resulting from ionising radiation. With the Chernobyl accident in 1986, the then European Community's immediate response was to take steps to protect its citizens from the consequences of the accident, at the same time re-examining its procedures from preventing similar disasters in its own territory.

### Malta

And where does Malta fit in all this? Well we do have a Civil Protection Department functioning and collaborating with other Civil Protection Departments in the EU Member States. Training of personnel is done both in Malta and abroad. The introduction of the common emergency line 112 is also in the pipeline. This number used all over the EU Member States is handy for one to remember without having to go through the hassles of finding out the emergency number of the country.

To conclude, Civil Protection is there for all, although when dealing with the issue, each Member State is responsible for the conduct of Civil Protection within its own territory.



## WASTE

### Towards a coherent waste policy - a European perspective

In a 'Millenium Tree Manifestation', which was recently organised by ECO - The Malta Ecological Foundation, in liaison with the St. Patrick's Craft Centre at St. Andrew's and the Education Division, children and young teenagers were asked to list what concerned them mostly about the Maltese environment. They were also asked to make recommendations about how they thought that these concerns could be best attended to. The responses that they presented were, after having been reviewed, attached to a 'tree', made up of recyclable materials. A small ceremony was held to mark this manifestation. Dr. Francis Zammit Dimech, the Minister for the Environment, and Dr. Louis Galea, the Minister for Education attended for this event and both remarked positively about the dedicated input of all the participants.

The issue of waste-management featured prominently with over 30% of the replies pointing at discontent with either the rubbish-dump at Maghtab or with the one at Xaghra.

CARTOON WASTE

PART 1 AND 2

While taking into clear consideration that the provision of a natural monopoly service comes before the requirement to abide by the Treaty, the article asserts equally as emphatically that where such a monopoly has such powers as to prevent all possible competition, the Treaty and competition rules should come into force. An apparent anomaly to this has been created, in our opinion, by the supporting of the exemption of these industries under rules governing the provision of public services by the decisions reached by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice whenever the issue has been laid before them.

A particular environmental mandate of the EU that appears to be particularly relevant to Malta is that which has been prescribed through the Community Action Program on the Environment (entitled "Towards Sustainability") which did not only promote sustainable development but also emphasized the need to complement legislation with the use of market-based instruments to change environmentally-damaging behaviour. Furthermore, it identifies energy as being a priority area in which environmental considerations need to be inserted into all policy proposals.

The notion of subsidiarity, which is at the heart of all European Union policies, (which we define - even though we thereby place ourselves at risk of being accused of being over-simplistic - as everyone doing their own thing and doing it well without unwarrantedly encroaching on the areas and competence of someone else), may perhaps be seen to be at logger-heads with bringing national policies throughout the European Union more closely in line (harmonization). This is because the harmonization of energy issues, and even of energy taxation, goes against the wishes of many Member States. It seems that, at least at this moment in time, they want to retain the sovereign right to use taxation to raise revenues in the way that they see fit. This implies that if the European Union is to be on-course of its broad objective to reduce economic and social inequalities between different regions, we must call for more time and effort to be invested in bringing about a greater element of inter-state cooperation, particularly where the implementation of energy policies is concerned and how European Union programs and funds are subscribed to and distributed.

This does not mean however that wider international perspectives have been totally ignored in the affairs of the European Community. For instance, going even as far back as 1991, at a special conference held in the Hague and attended by over fifty countries and the European Community, the objectives and principles set out in an Energy Charter Treaty were agreed to. The objectives were to improve the security of supply of energy; to maximize the efficiency of production, conversion, transport, distribution and use of energy; to enhance safety; and to minimize environmental problems. The principles were those of state sovereignty and sovereign rules over natural resources, non-discrimination, market-oriented pricing, and minimizing environmental problems. It seems that the Energy Charter Treaty was geared toward committing the countries ratifying it to facilitate access to resources and therefore to keep the rules on the exploration, development, and acquisition of energy resources transparent and non-discriminatory.

It is an undisputed fact that one of the founding ideals of the European Union is that of achieving a free European market, unhindered by cross-border controls and national tariffs. In consonance with this, one of the prime objectives of the EU's energy strategy is the creation of conditions for a market-oriented economy through the liberalization of the internal market for electricity and natural gas. Having said this, although there is a distinct lack of consensus as to how much the supply of such applications of energy such as electricity should be left to the free market, it seems that by 2003, in accordance with Directive 96/92/EC, large consumers will be allowed to choose from whom they purchase electricity. With gas, the mover towards liberalization appears to be much slower, and a phased approach is being adopted to allow at least major consumers to have open access to their choice of supplier. In the case of coal, in certain countries, (such as Germany, Spain and the U.K.), the operation of a free market has been effected with state-help. However, subsidies are being phased out and coal prices are being brought into line with international policies.

ECO - The Malta Ecological Foundation cautions against a hurried approach towards market liberalization, particularly in the energy field. This is because unless adequate safeguards are conceived and implemented, there will be long-term damaging effects on the environment. For instance, it is highly possible that the move towards market liberalization will result in increased competition with energy companies looking for short-term gains, often at the expense of the environment and thereby increasing social costs. Having said this, ECO strongly applauds a particular directive that may serve to counteract this from happening. This is the EC Environmental Impacts Assessment (EIA) Directive. It requires that for energy-related projects, including those of waste disposal installations and those of thermal power stations and other installations with a heat output of 300MW or more, a developer must provide information to the relevant competent authority about any likely significant environmental effects. Organizations with relevant environmental responsibilities and members of the public must be given the opportunity to comment on the project and environmental statement. The competent authority must then consider all of these when deciding whether to give the green light to the contemplated project.

It has to be remembered at all times that limits to resource use are no longer dependent upon the availability of resources, but rather on the local and global carrying capacity of the ecosystem to cope with the impact of their use. It appears to us that environmental costs do not tend to appear in the pricing strategies adopted in Europe and possibly all over the world. For this reason, we must caution in the most adamant of tones that it is generally very cheap to consume energy resources and pollute the environment and this is why it is more and more incumbent upon the individual purchaser to select products that are the most eco-friendly when effecting purchases. The particular urgency of this point can be illustrated by noting that carbon dioxide emissions, from our use of fossil fuels, amount to about 60% of the greenhouse problem.

This figure is set to increase to 75% by 2100 if no appropriate action is taken. Consistent with our notion of pinning down responsibility on individual purchasers, the European Union's Green Paper for a European Energy Policy, published in 1995, suggested that between 10% and 30% of primary energy consumption in Europe could be saved through "demand-side" energy efficiency improvements. This is easier said than done however and member-states seem to have experienced considerable difficulties in arriving at the promotion of rational energy use at the levels anticipated. A possible solution, no matter how partial, could be calling for support to be given to renewable energy development.

Renewables carry the undisputed advantage of offering increased energy supply, diversification, and reduced dependency on imports, apart from being greatly able to reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions from the energy sector. In Malta, with its fair availability of wind and sun, the employment of renewable energy offers economically and ecologically viable opportunities. Having said this, the wind-turbines would have to be located sensitively if they are not to produce a negative visual impact on our small islands. The noise they make carries over only a 200 range. Solar heating panels must be designed in such a way as to successfully incorporate them into the fabric of the architecture of our buildings, as well as not employing materials that would have a deleterious impact on the environment in their construction, thereby bringing the nation back to square one. Other 'renewables' include biomass, hydropower, wave-power, tidal power, geothermal power, and specific instances of waste incineration (usually when it can no longer be successfully recycled and when this incineration process does not have a detrimental impact on the environment).

Although Malta does not produce its own nuclear power, it is true to say that no nuclear power plant is too far away, particularly if things go wrong as the world clearly witnessed with the disaster at Chernobyl. The European Commission in its White Paper on Energy Policy entitled "An Energy Policy for the European Union (1996)" states that "given the contribution of nuclear energy to all the Communities' energy objectives, this option has to be kept open but its future depends to a large extent on its acceptability by society and political leaders. This acceptability problem derives particularly from concerns on nuclear safety, on transport, and disposals of nuclear waste and on nuclear non-proliferation." The Community has nevertheless developed a framework of legal and political instruments to define health and safety requirements. These cover such areas as radiation protection, safety of nuclear installations, management of radioactive waste, and international relations. Opponents to nuclear fuel usage claim that nuclear power, and its associated fuel cycle is uneconomic, carries a high level of risk, and is expensive to produce.

ECO, The Malta Ecological Foundation, sustains that to have an expanded, integrated Europe moving toward developing a sustainable energy structure; energy efficiency, conservation, cogeneration and renewables have to play increasingly vital roles as the EU gradually expands itself to take in new member states as time passes.

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**Food for Thought**

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is a publication of ECO, The Malta Ecological Foundation and forms part of the project

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