



Session outline/purpose:

The briefing sought to:

- inform participants about the European Commission's environmental policy priorities and actions and issues that will be coming up on the agenda; and
- enable an exchange of views between foundations and the Commission representative on potential areas of common interest and opportunities for synergy and cooperation.

Background:

The objective of the EC's Environment Directorate-General is to protect, preserve and improve the environment for present and future generations through policies that ensure a high level of environmental protection and that preserve the quality of life of EU citizens. The Commission's key priorities for 2002-2012 focus on nature and biodiversity, which will also be the theme of the 10th edition of the EU Green Week taking place in June 2010.

Commissioner's new priorities:

- Green Economy
- Biodiversity
- Resource Efficiency

Years / Themes:

- 2010 dedicated to Biodiversity
- 2011 dedicated to Resource Efficiency
- 2012 dedicated to Water
- 2013 dedicated to Development of an Air Policy

Policy Update:

What's coming up on the agenda?

- New EU Strategy on biodiversity expected end of 2010. The Directorate General for Environment is currently working on a baseline and the creation of indicators. Biodiversity is a very complex issue, touches on different areas, some non-environmental – developing comprehensive, all-inclusive policies represents a significant challenge.
- Roadmap on resource efficiency, biodiversity etc (2011)
- 6th Environment Action Programme to be launched in 2012

Some challenges in developing and implementing new policies and actions:

- Mainstreaming environmental issues across different policies
- Poor implementation of policies and enforcement of laws. EU is using infringement procedures aiming to have appropriate EU law transposition in the Member States. However, this tactic is not having positive outcomes
- Developing effective economic stimuli for environmental protection and achieving a balance between growth, development and environmental protection?

- Financial crisis impacts negatively on investments on environmental issues
- Lack of reliable and comparable data on environmental issues at European level
- Difficult to reach a consensus: the Lisbon Treaty requires unanimity on environmental legislation

Role of foundations and opportunities for synergies and cooperation

Foundations are already contributing in a number of important ways; however, participants recognised that there is scope and need for building synergies and improving coordination and cooperation both at the European and at the Member States levels in order to tackle effectively the environmental challenges Europe is facing. Foundations need to invest more in understanding EU policy making and actions and how to engage with and around these.

Foundations already support areas such as environmental education; research – to analyse environmental problems as well as aimed at developing scenarios to address these; conservation and protection of areas and species; actions to stop deforestation; or build green spaces/corridors.

The discussion highlighted a number of areas where stronger and more strategic involvement by foundations could contribute in significant ways in advancing Europe's environmental agenda. These include: investments in policy development and advocacy for more policy coherence; monitoring and promotion of implementation of EU legislation; development of effective strategies to address challenges in urban and vulnerable areas; testing market approaches to tackling environmental issues, whereby foundations can provide the "risk" capital; and development of effective communications strategies and quality journalism and reporting.