

Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD)

PRESS Release: FCSD puts forward specific proposals for sustainable mobility

The Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD) recently published a recommendation on the decoupling of growth from the use of resources and pressure on the environment in Belgium (Annex: 2007a09n.pdf). In this recommendation, the council deals in more depth with mobility and transport as the use of energy and environmental pressure are still a considerable problem in Belgium. The FRDO-CFDD has put forward a number of specific measures to redirect this trend (see box).

“Decoupling” means allowing the economy to grow without using resources or putting pressure on the environment to the same extent. This recommendation first examines whether progress has been made in Belgium in recent years. Decoupling is a complex concept: there has been progress in some areas and for some indicators while in other areas, there has been little or no progress. Efforts will have to be made in Belgium to reach the objectives in the field of emissions of greenhouse gases, fine particles, biodiversity, maintaining fish stocks within reference values, ozone concentrations and renewal sources of energy.

A decoupling policy should concentrate on areas where the pressure is greatest. In Belgium, efforts are required, especially in the domain of transport and mobility, to decrease the use of raw materials and energy and to ease the environmental impact. For this reason, in the second part of the recommendation, the FRDO-CFDD goes deeper into this problem. The council suggests some routes that can be taken to obtain more sustainable mobility. There are first a number of proposals to adjust the demand for mobility and to improve the supply of more sustainable mobility alternatives. It then deals with actions to obtain a “modal shift”, i.e. to switch to more sustainable mobility options. This concerns the setting up of activity zones, the extension of the rail and inland shipping network (including the GEN regional railway network) and the mobility plans of companies and institutions. The next route concerns the technological adjustments for greater energy and environmental efficiency of vehicles. The council is examining, among others, a soot filter for diesel engines to tackle the problem of fine particles.

Taxes are one of the instruments that can be used to encourage a “modal shift” towards more sustainable modes of transport and to stimulate more energy and environmentally efficient types when it comes to less sustainable modes of transport. The FRDO-CFDD examines a number of developments and proposals in this field including the greening of a fixed road tax and “pay as you drive”. The role of company cars in the mobility issue has also been highlighted. Lastly, the council suggests a number of actions to inform players and citizens about sustainable mobility and to raise their awareness on this issue.

These proposals are not new. What is important, however, is that they are examined as a whole. It is necessary to combine various approaches and to link various instruments in order to have an effect. In addition, it should be noted that all organisations within the FRDO-CFDD are behind this recommendation (employers, trade unions, NGOs, consumers, etc.) which means that there is extensive social support for a sustainable mobility policy.

Mobility: some specific proposals from the recommendation

- **Analysing beforehand the effects on mobility with regard to the location of companies, housing, shopping and recreation areas.**
- **Drawing up a national mobility plan. Regional and federal authorities should be implementing an integrated policy.**
- **Implement the GEN regional railway network plan completely and without any further delay and also invest in minor lines.**

- **Raise the awareness of all companies and institutions regarding the plan's specific scope to draw up a mobility plan and appoint a mobility coordinator**
- **By 2009, make a soot filter obligatory for existing diesel engines. Specify an allowance that will cover most of the cost of installing such filters.**
- **Forbid commercial short-haul flights (less than 150 kilometres) in Belgium given the polluting character of such flights and the availability of alternative means of transport.**
- **Increase the tax-free component of the bicycle allowance.**
- **Together with the Netherlands, investigate the possibility of introducing a smart "pay as you" ride scheme by 2011.**
- **In the meantime, modulate transport tax and road tax for new cars in accordance with the vehicle's emission criteria.**
- **Make an alternative mobility package for company cars possible and raise the awareness of companies and institutions for such a package and for an environmentally-friendly car policy.**
- **Make mentioning the carbon emission levels of cars obligatory for car commercials which should have the same size font as, for example, the vehicle's price and consumption. Also show this information to scale so that the consumer can see if the car is more or less polluting compared to the average.**
- **Obligatory carbon emission information should also be applied to advertising journeys by plane.**