

Impression of the Brussels pre-conference – 30 June 2004

About 80 representatives from government, industry, ngo's and science attended the Brussels conference. The attendants were presented with the preliminary results of the October Conference preparations. The Brussels conference was intended to provide all people that have been involved in the October Conference's preparatory phase with the latest information regarding the conclusions and the work of the snowball groups have been doing so far. This document contains a broad overview of the meeting.

Introduction

At the introductory presentation, Mrs. Petrouschka Werther – the Conference team leader – put apart the conference team's approach to the challenges that lie ahead concerning energy and sustainable mobility. Many parties have a comparable vision of the future, but they all have different ideas about how to arrive at this *wished for* situation. This pre-conference can be seen as a moment in time at which all these parties come together and exchange information about the routes they follow. By doing so, a stronger common understanding can be realized, ideas can be exchanged and new coalitions initiated.

October Conference preparations: state of affairs

Mr Barend van Engelenburg, a conference team member, elaborated on the current state of affairs regarding the conference conclusions. His presentation triggered several discussions. One attendant wondered how the conference team intends to guarantee that important messages from other initiatives will not be overlooked. Another attendant found the conference's focus too narrow, whilst someone else found it too broad. Some would like to see more tension in the conclusions, especially by making these more concrete.

After this, the three snowball groups presented their interim results.

Snowball: Creating a joint perspective on clean vehicles and fuels

Mr. Barend van Engelenburg elaborated on creating a joint perspective on clean vehicles and fuels. Members of the group who were in the audience acknowledged that it was worthwhile discussing this issue with a wide variety of stakeholders. However, it was made clear that it will be difficult to become more specific if there isn't any strong political commitment.

Snowball: Market development and consumer behaviour

Mr. Carol Werner presented the intermediate results of the second snowball group on consumer behaviour and creating markets for clean vehicles and fuels. His presentation triggered discussions about the role of the state: do we need a strong government or not? At least there seems to be broad consensus regarding the lack of *thrust* in sustainable transport policy: there are not enough incentives to substantially speed up the pace towards mobility with minimal external effects. There is a broad acknowledgement that something has to be done, but often the consumer's willingness to act is lacking.

During discussions, following directions for solutions emerged:

- Governments can lead by example: By making huge public fleets more sustainable, the government can set an example and trigger and stimulate further developments.
- Governments can provide an unambiguous framework within which it could choose to stimulate either developments of new technologies based on ultimate goals or promising technologies in general. Hereby it is important that new technologies can compete with existing ones. This stimulates development of new technologies on the one hand, but also stimulates speeding up of development of existing technologies.
- Governments could impose stricter rules in certain areas.
- Perception of buyers could be influenced, for example about why a certain car is considered better than another. How to make people take environmental performance into consideration?

Snowball: Sustainable urban transport in the new member states

The last snowball presentation on Sustainable urban transport in the new member states (NMS) was delivered by Mr. Rob Sangen. Challenges that NMS are faced with differ quantitatively rather than qualitatively from those in EU15 nations. The modal split is still quite favourable for public transport, but it quickly loses ground to private vehicle use for various reasons. Current vehicle stocks in NMS cities are much older and more polluting than those in EU15 cities. There are many chances to improve the situation in all European cities by learning from each other. One of the main findings of the group is that it would be very valuable to aim at providing access for all citizens to all their (basic) needs instead of focussing on the means to do so. Hereby a framework is

needed within which fair and efficient pricing mechanisms play a central role. Prices should be determined based on the external effects of the different options to fulfil ones needs.

Successes and failures of innovations

The next presentation was done by professor Jeroen van den Bergh (Vrije Universiteit from Amsterdam). He presented the intermediate results of a research project on decisive factors for success and failure of innovations. The final results will be presented at the October Conference. It is obvious that we do not often enough look back and learn from the past. There is still a lot to be learnt from developments in the past and therefore it is hoped that this research project initiates comparable exercises in other nations.

Learning network

The morning session was concluded by a presentation of Mr. Boersma from Integral. He provided the attendants with a glance of a learning network, which will officially be launched at the October Conference. The conference team spoke to a lot of parties throughout Europe and there obviously seems to be a need for an accessible network that really helps to find answers and inspiration. The network aims to fulfil these needs by making available a lot of existing information and by collecting questions and answers. People can ask questions that will be answered by the system. When no answer can be found, the question will be redirected to one of the experts involved in the network.

Lunch and drinks

After the morning session the attendants gathered for drinks and lunch. The organization grasped this opportunity to collect pictures for the learning network.

Afternoon

In the afternoon, the three snowball groups gathered again and discussed about the possible topics for the parallel sessions of the October Conference, issues that are missing so far.

Please find all presentations on our web-site: www.eu-conference2004.nl