

# COMMUNICATING WITH INDICATORS TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL POLITICIANS IN FINLAND – the story of leaflets



“Visualising and Presenting Indicator Systems”

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S Y K E

Meeting of the Finnish National Commission  
for Sustainable Development March 2, 2005

Secretary general  
of the FNCSD

Prime Minister

Minister of Agriculture  
and Forestry

Minister of the  
Environment



# Finnish SDI setting

- First set of SDIs in 2000
- Update on 2002
- Re-structuring on 2004
- Currently about 70 indicators grouped along the lines of EEA GEAR-SD model
- Indicators are updated in internet irregularly, leaflets are provided according to the FNCSD schedule, additional concise ppt-presentations are provided to the parliament

**8 INDICATORS  
4 TIMES A YEAR  
FNCS D**

**25 INDICATORS  
ONCE A YEAR  
200 PARLIAMENTARIANS, CIVIL SERVANTS**

**70 INDICATORS  
CONTINUOUSLY, BUT NOT ON-LINE  
INTERNET, TO EVERYONE**



**S Y K E**

# Research on indicators and policy makers

- Research on how and on which conditions policy makers are willing to use indicators. At the same time indicators were “marketed” to the target group.
- Individual interviews, 30-45 minutes, recorded and transcribed
- n=40, Including about 20 Members of the Parliament, their assistants, Member of the European Parliament, Minister of the Environment (in fact 2), director generals of most ministries, head of the information service of the Parliament

# Results of the interviews

- Finnish Politicians do not want headline indicators, they were interested on getting more than one indicator in one issue. Larger core set was considered good.
- Some of the DGs of Ministries wish for more concise sets of indicators (perharps of their own sector)
- The DMs highlighted the need for reliability, objectivity and long enough time series in (environment) information
- Members of the Parliament would not use the indicators for decision-making but to support their already existing views, in presenations, background material
- Everyone had a need for compact/ concise information

# Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development

- Founded in 1993, chaired by the prime minister, ministerial level representative of each party in the government, also NGOs, interest groups, civil servants
- The FNCSD's work plan for the period 2003-2007 contains, among others, the following themes:
  - trade, development and poverty, long-term goals of climate change policy, sustainable transport and mobility, corporate social responsibility, ecological tax reform, reduction of eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, biodiversity, protection and sustainable management of the forests, sustainable regional development, assessment of impacts on human welfare

# When we combined existing work, policy maker's needs and the political agenda...

Core set of  
70  
indicators

FNCSD  
working  
programme  
with themes

Results of the  
interviews



Quick publishing (photocopying) enables the very latest updates on data

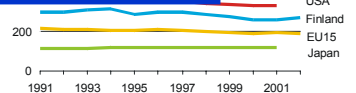
Not long texts, but still the message we want to give is clear



Source: Statistics Finland

**MOST ENVIRONMENTAL TAX REVENUES COME FROM TRAFFIC**

Structure of environmentally related taxes and fees 2002



Source: Eurostat  
\* Energy consumption in oil-kg equivalents  
GDP: 1000 euros in 1995 prices

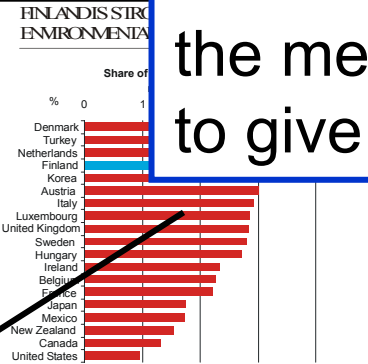
**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COSTS INCREASING THE FASTEST**

Costs of private and public transport 1980-2003

Small size, quick to read, fits into a pocket

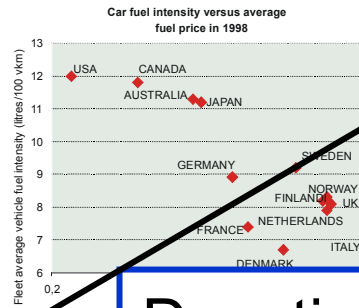


Sources: Statistics Finland and OECD



Source: OECD

**PRICES STEER FUEL INTENSITY OF VEHICLES**

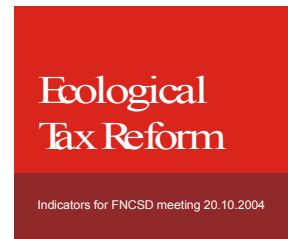


Source: Reproduction of 30 years of energy

/ Environ  
www.gre

Policy relevance – information and information needs meet

Devotion to outlook: colours, pictures, layout



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Photo: Timo Lehtinen

# The selection process:

- The FNCSD secretariat approves the indicators, SYKE coordinates the proposals and makes the first draft
- Indicators are based on experts, background papers, and existing statistics
- Usually pretty intensive discussions during the meetings, for example interest groups/ NGOs
- → the discussion is part of indicators' role
- Not looking for compromises, secretary general of FNCSD has the last say

# Advantages of the leaflet approach

- ✓ Attracts the attention of highlevel politicians, many others have asked for reprints
- ✓ Does not require too many resources (time or money), very cost effective

# Disadvantages of the leaflet

- The interpretations are narrow, may lead to wrong interpretations
- No update, short lived
- Despite the high level users, circulation is relatively small (although in internet)

Indicators can really be interesting to policy makers,  
depends on **when** and **how** they are presented!

Thank you!

