

WFA seminar
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Opening speech
Mr. Risto Koivisto, President of WFA

We know that the idea of sustainable development is generally accepted today although it is always not clear what it means. One way of defining it is the following quotation from the Brundtland Commission in 1987:
"To meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

Nowadays the sustainable development is also an integral part of the European Unions policy making. I need only to mention The European Sustainable Strategy 2001 accepted by the European Council in Gothenburg.

In this seminar we will deal with policy subjects such as environmental strategies, sustainable development, eco-innovation, environmental technology, indicators and supportive incentives. These matters are examined from the regional point of view where all the actors can be found and where the policy goals are made true.

The implementation of sustainable development needs real action and that has to be delivered by the actors in the regions. We will present a regional model where planning and financial resources, knowledge and innovative environmental technology is combined in the coherent way to implement and deliver sustainable development.

However from the political point of view this is not enough. Changes need investments and investments need political support. Impacts of investments have to be made visible and understandable. That is why we need indicators to tell us what has been achieved. To some extent there is lack of suitable monitoring instruments on regional level and we would like to initiate a discussion on the further development and use of regional indicators.

In order to further elaborate the above mentioned subjects and to have a fruitful discussion we have invited you - experts and representatives from other European regions - to this seminar. We would like to find discussion partners, business partners and project partners to deepen and improve the implementation of regional sustainable development through real European co-operation.

We think that by having common strategies, combining resources and using innovative technologies we can also combine sustainable development with the goals for competitiveness, innovation and job creation. As a matter of fact this is the only reasonable way to tackle this burning challenge.

I want to emphasize that common strategies, strong wish and commitment can change direction and improve the future situation. The European policies create the general framework, but the real action and implementation is done by the European regions.

In the following presentations we will see how innovative action by using environmental technologies can contribute to solve problems and create possibilities.