

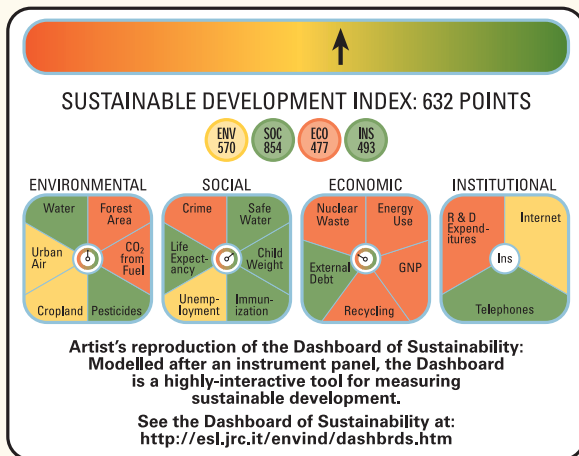
## WHY?

It is too easy for people, communities and governments to dismiss achievements and failures on the path toward sustainability. Sustainable development is a complex phenomenon to measure as it requires specific, sophisticated and specialized work to produce a meaningful device.

**The Dashboard of Sustainability is a truly meaningful device.**

As it evolves, we will have a better understanding of our progress toward sustainability and the ability to inform policy-making for the betterment of all people.

Your support will contribute toward the development of the Dashboard and, ultimately, toward significant progress toward sustainable development.



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BETTER LIVING FOR ALL—  
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**OUR MISSION**  
TO CHAMPION INNOVATION,  
ENABLING SOCIETIES TO LIVE  
SUSTAINABLY.

October 2001

The Measure of Progress

THE DASHBOARD  
OF SUSTAINABILITY

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## PEOPLE MEASURE EVERYTHING

To understand our personal health, we gauge our blood pressure and our cholesterol levels. To assess our finances, we stay on top of our bank statements and investment portfolios.

To appreciate the status of a company's well-being, we review financial reports and stakeholder feedback.

To grasp the state of the economy, we look at the stock market indices, GDP, inflation rates and other figures.

To measure athletic performance, we gather statistics and lists that are meaningful to fans and sports media.

We measure everything because we have a need to acquire knowledge about our world and respond to that knowledge in ways that empower and enrich us as individuals, organizations and societies.

But some things are more difficult to measure than others.

How do we measure sustainable development? How do we know when economic, social and environmental policies are helping us to achieve sustainability? How do we know when policies set us back? How can we measure our planet's health?

The IISD Dashboard of Sustainability is proving to be one of the most useful and innovative tools ever developed.

## AN ENGAGING METAPHOR

The Dashboard is a visually-engaging, online tool designed to be understood by experts, the media, policy-makers and the general public. Using the almost universally-recognized image of an instrument panel, it presents four dials representing economic, environmental, social and institutional performance.

Each dial is an aggregate of several indicators (rate of employment, forest cover and level of literacy, for example), displayed as coloured wedges. The colour of the indicator tells the story. Shades of green indicate the most positive or sustainable conditions; yellow is neutral; red is an urgent warning of non-sustainability in an area. The effect is an easily-understood gauge of a country's sustainable development performance and a demonstration of how it compares to other countries.

The Dashboard of Sustainability has garnered international attention and was recently named as the United Nations' primary indicator of sustainability performance.

The Dashboard is powered by unique software that can be accessed at <http://esl.jrc.it/envind/dashbrds.htm>. It is a remarkable tool that has been developed over two years at a cost of half-a-million dollars. However, more work needs to be done to perfect the Dashboard and enhance its functionality and meaningfulness for policy-makers.

## THE NEXT STEP

The initial consultation and development phase was completed ahead of schedule and a second phase is poised to begin.

Once the second phase is complete, the Dashboard will be unveiled at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002. Over 60,000 delegates from around the globe will attend this summit, where they will assess progress toward sustainability since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and set the agenda for the years to come.

Because it presents easily understood empirical measurements based on sound scientific data, the Dashboard will offer a significant assessment tool for the world's sustainable development community.

In the second phase, which will require US\$250,000 in funding, our international team of experts will:

1. develop the software that will allow the tool to link seamlessly to the Internet;
2. create a state-of-the-art database system to handle the ever-growing flux of data and make interactive online analysis possible; and
3. revamp the indicator sets used in the initial phase of this project to comply with a consensus-based set that better reflects the needs of its users. (*Using the most appropriate indicators is critical to the Dashboard's success.*)