



Call for Abstracts

Sustainable Development in Policy Assessment – Methods, Challenges and Policy Impacts

June 15th – 16th, 2009
Brussels, Belgium



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SÖF Social-
Ecological
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EPOS

Evaluating Policies for
Sustainable Development



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Background

Ten years ago, the European Union fixed the concept “sustainable development” as a goal in the EU's treaty of Amsterdam. Ever since then, the relevance of this concept has increased. In 2001, the European Council adopted the European Sustainable Development Strategy. As a reaction to this strategy, the Commission decided, in 2002, that social, economic and ecological impacts of proposals have to be assessed systematically. Since 2005, Impact Assessments (IA) have to be carried out ex-ante for all proposals submitted by the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme.

Impact Assessments have meanwhile become a “tool”. They are not only used by the Commission to assess potential impacts. Also policy makers, member states, NGOs and businesses working on sustainable development use Impact Assessments to strengthen their arguments and to influence the political decision making process. For example, in the field of energy policy or during the discussions about a new regulation of the chemical policy (REACH), IAs were used extensively. Not infrequently, different IAs from different actors have diverging outcomes on the same topic.

Evaluation studies are requested on demand by the Commission or according to the requirements of several European directives. Most of these are ex-post facto to judge the impact of measures, programmes and activities and to improve policy-making. The conference, however, follows a broader concept of evaluations and looks at the beginning of a policy cycle (ex-ante assessments), the implementation process (interim evaluation) and at the end of the policy cycle (ex-post evaluations) and asks for implications of such systematic approaches to the concept of sustainable development.

Policy evaluation might support the integration of sustainable development in different policies. However, the concept of sustainable development is multifaceted, and the definition varies with different actors. Concomitantly, there is no precise understanding as to what should be included in an evaluation of sustainability and how it should be conducted. The conference addresses this problem from different perspectives, including the views of evaluators as well as political actors, who act as commissioning agents and work with evaluation or assessments results.

Objectives

The conference would like to add to the understanding of sustainability evaluation by especially addressing the following questions:

- What is sustainability evaluation's contribution to policy development and implementation?
- How should sustainability evaluations be designed to affect political decision-making?
- How can one strengthen sustainability goals and impacts in policy evaluation and assessment?
- How can the quality of sustainability evaluations be improved?

Key topics and working groups

We invite contributions that tackle methodological challenges as well as the question of how the institutionalisation of sustainability evaluation can be improved. The conference will be organised in seven working group sessions dealing with specific subthemes:

- Defining Sustainable Development as an Evaluation Object
- Methodological Challenges in Evaluating Sustainable Development
- Methods for Evaluating Sustainable Development
- Integrated Approaches in Evaluating Sustainable Development
- Institutionalisation of Sustainability Evaluation
- Politics, Policy Styles and Evaluation
- Science Policy Interface

For illustrating evaluation challenges, experience and policy impacts, we would welcome case studies on the role of impact assessments and evaluation studies on different topics (e.g. chemical or energy policy) in political decision making processes.

Target Audience

We encourage contributions from evaluation practitioners from research and consultancy, academia, commissioners of evaluations, especially on the European level, policy makers, interface institutions, and businesses working on sustainable development.

Submission of abstracts

Your proposal should include an abstract (in English), which will be evaluated by our reviewing conference board. On the basis of this review process, contributions will be selected and assigned to workshops. In addition to the abstract of up to 500 words, please include the name of the main author (name, given name, title), any co-authors (name, given name, title), your organisation (name, postal address), the type of organisation (business, academic, NGO, administrative, policy maker), and phone, fax, email and web address for the main author. Please indicate the workshop to which you aim to make a contribution.

Abstracts should be submitted via email. Please send your contributions to the following address:

margarete.fischer@ioew.de.

A selection of the most important and innovative contributions will be published as a book after the conference.

Schedule for the submission of contributions

Submission of abstracts until January 31st, 2009

Decision on acceptance until February 28th, 2009

Date and Location

The Conference will take place in Brussels/Belgium on June 15th to 16th, 2009 at the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union.

Conference Fee

There will be a small conference fee to cover catering and preparatory information.

Project

The conference is organised by the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IOEW) and Ecologic – Institute for International and European Environmental Policy. It is part of the EPOS project (Evaluating Policies for Sustainable Development). EPOS is a research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the framework of socio-ecological research (SOEF). The main focus of the project is policy evaluation with emphasis on sustainability issues. The network is concerned with the evaluation of policies, political strategies, programmes, and instruments.

EPOS-Partners

- Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels
- Centre for Evaluation (CEval), Saarland University/Germany
- Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), Milan/Italy
- Impact Assessment Research Centre (IARC) of the Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester/UK
- Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) - Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam/UK
- Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), London/UK
- Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP), Bilthoven & The Hague/The Netherlands
- Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (RIMAS), Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Vienna/Austria
- Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Stockholm/Sweden

Conference Board

- Dr. Jan Bakkes (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Bilthoven/The Hague)
- Clive George (The Impact Assessment Research Centre, University of Manchester)
- Prof. Colin Kirkpatrick (The Impact Assessment Research Centre, University of Manchester)
- R. Andreas Kraemer (Ecologic – Institute for International and European Environmental Policy, Berlin)
- Dr. André Martinuzzi (Research Institute for Managing Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration)
- Dr. Wolfgang Meyer (Center for Evaluation, University of the Saarland, Saarbrücken)
- Prof. Rolf Sprenger (Institute for Ecological Economy Research, Berlin)

Contact

If you have questions regarding programme or organisation, please contact

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Submission of Abstracts

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Programme

June 15th, 2009

- 13.00 – 15.00 Opening of the conference
**"Understanding Sustainability Evaluation and
its Contribution to Policy-making"**
Keynotes and Panel Discussion
- 15.30 – 17.30 Working group session I

June 16th, 2009

- 09.00 – 11.00 Working group session II
11.30 – 13.30 Working group session III
14.30 – 16.30 Closing session
"Increasing the Usefulness of Sustainability Evaluation"
Keynotes and Panel Discussion

Working groups

Defining Sustainable Development as an Evaluation Object

It is not only within different DGs of the European Commission that there are diverse interpretations of the concept "sustainable development". This problem continues at different political and spatial levels. The workshop deals with the challenge of equivocal sustainability definitions. What are the consequences of diverse interpretations of sustainability and a non-existent common framework to evaluate sustainability? How can evaluators measure sustainability impacts without a common understanding? What indicators are appropriate for measuring sustainability impacts? How can evaluation results be most relevant to policy-makers? How do policy-makers deal with the diverging interpretations of sustainable development in evaluation reports?

Methodological Challenges in Evaluating Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development poses methodological challenges such as integrating stakeholders, taking-up a long-term perspective, or looking at a global scale. How can these be addressed in evaluation designs? What general methodological requirements should be fulfilled by sustainability evaluations? Which methodological requirements result from political practice? How can methodological challenges be integrated in political decision making?

Methods for Evaluating Sustainable Development

Sustainability evaluation uses both conventional and innovative methods. The aim of this workshop is to discuss new approaches and methods applied in sustainability evaluations. Promising methods could be qualitative participatory approaches, systemic evaluation, scenario techniques, etc. or new developments in quantitative techniques including CBA, CEA, multi-criteria-analysis or non-market valuations. Moreover, the integration of different methods in evaluation projects, especially the combination of quantitative and qualitative or participatory and modelling tools should be addressed. Contributions should focus on ease of application, the suitability in policy advice, and strengths and weaknesses of the presented methods.

Integrated Approaches in Evaluating Sustainable Development

The ideal type of sustainability evaluation integrates all three dimensions of the concept – ecology, economics and social issues. But how can this be done adequately? And what does "adequately" mean? Since 2005, the European Commission has been stressing the need to investigate (non-) intended positive and negative side-effects of a policy proposal. What does that mean for integrated approaches? What are the problems arising out of this request? This workshop will have a closer look at integrated approaches of sustainability evaluation, including methods, problems and premises. It will also address the question of how policy-makers can include integrated results in policy-making.

Institutionalisation of Sustainability Evaluation

To date, policy evaluations have often been applied on an ad hoc and unsystematic basis. The consideration of sustainability aspects throughout the policy cycle needs a stronger institutionalisation. This workshop aims at discussing adequate structures and institutional settings. What does experience show with institutionalisation of evaluations? How can learning loops between different evaluations be organised? What capacities are necessary on the side of the commissioning agents regarding the monitoring of an evaluation? A discussion about different levels and forms of institutionalisation and their impact on evaluation results and quality can also be part of this workshop.

Politics, Policy Styles and Evaluation

Different countries have different political cultures and policy styles. This is not surprising – but what does that mean for evaluations? What role do different (political) cultures play in the evaluation context – for the evaluator, the evaluandum and decision makers? The aim of this workshop is to discuss different policy styles and their effect on evaluations. Which evaluation approaches “fit most” to different policy styles? Which conditions must exist in order for countries to learn from each other? What is the experience regarding sustainability evaluations outside of Europe?

Science Policy Interface

Aiming to inform decision-makers on the potential impacts of their decisions, evaluations are at the heart of the interface of science and policy. Therefore, they are predestined to make science relevant for policy-making, but this interaction is not always as effective as desired. The workshop deals with the question of how evaluation results resonate in political practice. Do political actors consider evaluation results in decision making processes? Do evaluations foster policy learning? How does policy learning proceed? How can this be measured? Did the introduction of Impact Assessments in the European Union change the policy-making process?