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Why is integrating policy assessment so hard? A comparative analysis of the institutional capacities and constraints

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Abstract

Widely advocated as a means to make policy making more integrated, policy assessment remains weakly integrated in practice. But explanations for this shortfall, such as lack of staff training and resources, ignore more fundamental institutional factors. This paper identifies institutional capacities supporting and constraining attempts to make policy assessment more integrated. A comparative empirical analysis of functionally equivalent assessment systems in four European jurisdictions finds that there are wide-ranging institutional constraints upon integration. These include international policy commitments, the perception that assessment should support rather than determine policy, organisational traditions, and the sectorisation of policy

making. This paper concludes by exploring the potential for altering these institutions to make policy assessment more integrated.

Keywords:

policy assessment | integration | sustainable development | institutional analysis | environmental policy | evidence-based policy

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Notes

1. Interview with UK Civil Servant ‘A’.

2. Interview with EU Strategic Officer ‘B’.

3. Interview with UK Civil Servant ‘C’.

4. Interview with UK Civil Servant ‘G’.

5. Interview with German Environment Ministry official.

6. Interview with German Environment Ministry official.

7. Interview with German Environment Ministry official.

8. Interview with German Agricultural Ministry official.

9. Interview with Swedish Committee official ‘B1’.

10. Interview with EU Policy Officer ‘J’.

11. Interview with farmers' association.

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