Experiences with science-policy interface for sustainable development in Europe

UN Expert Group Meeting on the Science-Policy Interface

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Overview on content

1) Background on the ESDN
2) General experiences with science-policy interface in Europe
3) Study on knowledge management of SD policy-makers in Europe
4) Suggestions for the Global SD Report
European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)

**Background and Activities:**

- **Informal network of public administrators dealing with SD strategies and policies in Europe** (since 2002);
- **Main network for SD policy-makers** in Europe (280 members from 36 countries, incl. EU-28);
- **Exchange** experiences, knowledge and good practices;
- **Policy briefs/recommendations** on specific SD topics;
- **ESDN conferences** and **thematic workshops**;
- **ESDN homepage**: country profiles, Quarterly Reports, case studies, etc.
**General experiences with science-policy interface in Europe (1)**

- **Policy-makers**: the term, as used in Europe, refers to public administrators and politicians;
- Not one type of policy-makers: their interest and use of scientific work often depends on personal capacity and preferences;
- **Political climate decisive** if scientific information is used → scientific findings need to fit the political agenda;
- **Credibility of scientific source** is also very important for policy-makers → many use reports by well-know organizations (UN, OECD, etc);
- **Different kinds of knowledge**: scientific, expert, local, etc.
General experiences with science-policy interface in Europe (2)

- **Research in the EU is very policy driven:** European Commission has research program (FP7) → but what happens with results?
- **European SD Strategy (EU SDS) is weak policy document & lacks**
  - political support,
  - forward-looking goals (it’s a “strategy by staplers”),
  - a governance mechanism, and
  - evaluation and follow-up activities.
- **Example of science-policy cooperation:** Research Agendas on 3 sustainable consumption areas in EU-funded research project CORPUS (www scp-knowledge.eu)
Institute for Managing Sustainability undertook study in 2010: 25 telephone interviews (24 national SD coordinators, 1 EU policy officer), below some results:

- **Structured vs. unstructured interaction**: some countries (Northern & Western Europe, UK) have systematic and structured exchange betw. policy-makers and scientists, others (Central, Eastern and Southern Europe) have unstructured exchange → depends on historical developments and political culture;

- **Use of scientific knowledge by policy-makers** depends on certain criteria, e.g. language, presentation of results, implications for policy-making, etc;

- **Interactions between policy-makers and scientists** vary, but face-to-face meetings are important for direct exchange.
Recommendations for Global SD Report

1) **Very clear statement:** What is intended with this report? **Why should policy-maker use it? What is the added-value?**

2) **Vision for 2050** is necessary (2030 is too close for a long-term vision);

3) **Catalogue of clear objectives,** if possible quantified for meaningful follow-up;

4) **Definition of actions for the different levels** (global, national, sub-national);

5) **Clear timelines** and evaluation procedures;

6) **Political support,** ideally high-level political backing.