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Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: Reducing Water-related risks in Europe

Science-Policy links - Environment policy perspective

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Science in the environment policy cycle (1)

- **Scoping**: does the EU need to be concerned?
  - Is the (scientific) evidence of damage to the environment convincing?
  - Is it an EU-wide problem / issue (scoping study)?
  - Can EU action – using sound science – bring a remedy?
  - Does action fall within EU competence (6EAP, Treaty)?
  - Is the issue of sufficient priority to warrant EC resources?

- **Gathering the evidence, drafting legislation or other instrument**
  - What data / information of sufficient quality exists already (availability, volume, ‘language’)?
  - What data gaps need to be filled by further scientific research?
Impact Assessment, Inter-Service Consultation, Adoption by Commission.
- IA as a vital filter: no (scientific) evidence = no proposal

Inter-institutional process, transposition, entry into force
- (Scientific) evidence needs to be decisively overwhelming

Implementation (support, guidelines, comitology)
- Plain, simple reasons why EU action is in the public interest

Review (revision) update – new evidence ...
So what’s the problem?

- **Policy-makers** do not get their kicks from publication + peer-review
  - Risk percentages, caveats… – not useful to convince and engage others
- **Scientists** do not get a warm inner glow from policy success
  - Precautionary principle anathema to scientific method?
- The **language** of science is surprisingly far from the language of policy
- There are not enough ‘interpreters’ capable of converting great science into great policy.
- Policy-making at the EU level is generally complex.
- Constraints: policy-makers work to a Work Programme target date; but research can take longer…; silos, not synergies.
And the solutions?

**Short-term:**

- Unravel status quo, examine key env policy data sources: JRC, EEA, EDCs, ad hoc studies, past studies, remote sensing, data from Member States …
- Devise real scientist/policy-maker interface (*Sci for Env Pol* e-zine)
- Detail what ‘evidence for env policy’ actually means
- Explore ways to ‘reward’ research for policy-making
- Focus on key priorities (both policy and knowledge base)
  - Biodiversity (2010); Resource Efficiency (2011)
  - Water (2012); [Air (2013)]
- Move further ahead on INSPIRE, GMES, remote sensing …
More solutions ....

■ Medium-term

- Construct functional clearing house (?) on science for environment
- Ensure (continuity of) funding for research + engage specific IT
- Generate horizon-scanning capacity (DG Environment / scientific)

■ Long-term

- SEIS >>>Shared Env Info System >>>Knowledge-base for environment policy;
- Easy access to a structured system of environmental information, inter alia based on key principles:
  - “Data stored as close to its source as possible”
  - “Produced once, for use many times”.
What benefits will trickle down from SEIS?

- Better (‘smart’) regulation, better policy
- Empowering citizens
- Simplification and efficiency (implementation)
- Promoting best practice
- Boosting Innovation and Intelligent eServices: eEurope, eGovernment, eEnvironment ... effective IT solutions
When EC Environment policy work started 43 years ago, there were 5 scientists and 1 lawyer. DG Environment is built around science. Today, 540 staff work in DG Environment, including many highly-qualified scientists ….. but probably not a ratio of 5:1

Public perception of scientists differs from public perception of public officials.

Climate facts are relatively easy (IPCC), but biodiversity, natural capital, resource efficiency, env risk assessment… less so.

The EU is often seen as a leader in environmental protection, but current legislation is inadequately implemented, so objective goals are often missed.
Thank you for your attention