Session 5
Assessing government capacity for policy integration: learning from the past 25 years

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Orientation

- **The challenge:**
  Sustainable Development (SD) and policy integration

- **Key responses:**
  Integrated goals and strategies

- **Performance:**
  Why goals and strategies often failed to deliver

- **Outlook:**
  Learning from the past 25 years
The challenge: SD and policy integration

- The policy integration challenge is as old as specialized governments are, but it gained relevance due to
  - further fragmentation of governments and
  - the emergence of complex problems

- Progress in terms of political concepts and rhetorics: „Green growth“ instead of „Growth at any cost“ (1970s answer to „Limits to Growth“ after recession)

- … but still problems in actual policy-making.

- My focus: how EU Member States aimed to integrate SD and climate change policies across sectors --- with integrated strategies
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Key responses: integrated goals and strategies

- Integrated goals specified in
  - Agenda 21
  - MDGs
  - Integrated strategies (EU, national, local)

- Integrated strategies: aim to solve complex problems by coordinating policies across sectors (and levels of government) – usually demanded by international agreements (Agenda 21, UNFCCC …)
  - SD
  - Climate change mitigation
  - Climate change adaptation

- Functions of integrated strategies
  - Policy document: provide vision, guidance …
  - Governance process: facilitate policy integration across sectors
  - Capacity building: raise awareness, facilitate learning, implement monitoring …
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Performance: strategies as document & governance

Strategies as policy documents --- goals
- Too many: no clear priorities
- Too „Un-SMART“ - rarely Specific, Measurable, Adequate, Realistic, Timed
- Too far away from sectoral interests and commitments

Strategies (and related integration mechanisms) as governance
- Too ambitious: focus mainly on governance function; coordinating entire government policymaking not possible
- Too voluntary, too „cheap“: no legal basis (except Climate Change Act 2008 in the UK), no extra budgets (except Delta Programme for climate change adaptation in NL), no „sustainable budgeting“ (except trials in UK)
- Too detached from sectoral policymaking (except sectoral SD strategies in the UK): sectoral rationales still rule – this will not change anytime soon
- Too uniform: all countries failed in similar ways (except sectoral Delta Programme in NL)

Overall: Although integrated strategies emphasised their governance function, most of them failed to facilitate policy integration
Performance: strategies as capacity building

- Inter-ministerial bodies: communication and awareness raising as by-product of (failed) policy coordination

- Sustainability Impact Assessments: pro-forma rather than substantial

- SD monitoring: comprehensive data sets with little political relevance

- Stakeholder involvement:
  - Ad-hoc: works for shaping concrete projects, not for formulating strategy documents
  - Institutionalised: SD Councils/Commissions played a significant role when given resources (UK, Germany)

Overall: promising function of integrated strategies - with untapped potential
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- Performance: Why goals and strategies often failed to deliver
- Outlook: Learning from the past 25 years
Learning from the past 25 years:
Strategies as policy documents and governance

- Too many „Un-SMART“ goals >>> operationalise long-term vision with short-term, SMART and sectoral priorities
- Too ambitious … >>> shift attention from policy coordination to capacity building
- Too voluntary … >>> work towards legal basis for SDGs; try „sustainable budgeting“/green fiscal reform
- Too detached from sectoral policymaking … >>> do not try to overcome but embrace sectoral policymaking (sectoral SD strategies)
- Too uniform… >>> facilitate diversity and (global) exchange of good practices
Learning from the past 25 years: Strategies as capacity building

- Communication as by-product ...>>> Reframe integratd strategies as communication tools: communicate common interests of different sectors

- But: information alone is not enough --- example sustainable public procurement: educating and training public procurers is necessary

- SD monitoring politically irrelevant ...>>> Rankings (national, international) make it interesting

- Think about new ways of exchange between sectors: job-rotation between ministries can facilitate inter-sectoral understanding

- Participation via SD councils ... >>> high-profile or nothing

**Overall:** there is room to improve government capacities for policy integration, but: only small policy changes without adequate governance
Assessing policy integration

Thanks for your attention!


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Discussion

- **Questions & comments on the presentation**

- **Key responses & performance critique:** What integrative governance arrangements (strategies, committees …) do you know and how well did they perform?

- **Success stories:** Do you know successful examples of actual policy integration? What key factors made them possible? What role did government capacities play?
Policy integration – example 1
Sustainable public procurement (with cost savings)

- Instead of paying for shredding old paper --- require recycling when buying new paper
- Instead of burning old textiles --- require recycling when buying new textiles
- ...

Key factors: agenda setting, awareness raising & creativity (question habits!)
Policy integration – example 2
Energy-efficient housing in Austria: CO2 emissions of housing sector decreased by 25% between 1990-2011 (despite more & larger residences)

- Besides rising oil/gas prices also due to numerous new building standard and housing promotion reforms since 1990
- First resistance (emphasis on social policies), then discovery of common interests (fighting energy poverty through energy efficiency; enhancing energy security)

**Key factors:** time & common interests
Policy integration – example 3 (in the making)
„Energiewende“ in Germany: Renewable energy sources replace fossil fuels and nuclear energy

- Policy change not due to SD/climate strategies but due to coinciding multiple concerns that opened policy window
  - Safety (Fukushima)
  - Energy security (Russian gas)
  - Competitiveness (solar and wind energy industry)
  - Climate change concerns

**Key factors:** public opinion and high-level political commitment shaped by these concerns
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**Outlook:**

- What can we learn from failures and success stories? How can governments enhance their capacities for implementing the SDGs?
- What role should integrated strategies play? What role should laws, budgeting, communication, etc. play?

- Context: In how far are the challenges and approaches of policy integration universal, in how far are they different in developing countries?