

# **THE USE OF INDICATORS IN REPORTING BY THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY AND THE POTENTIAL USEFULNESS OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS**

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## **1 THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

The European Environment Agency (EEA) began work ten years ago with the purpose of providing the European Community and the Member States with information on the state of the environment in Europe, so that they would have a sound basis for policy action. Having been the first European Union (EU) body to take in all the acceding and candidate states, today the EEA has 31 member countries.

Increasingly, the Agency has been asked by the European Parliament, the European Commission and our member countries to report and advise not only on the state of the environment, but also on the effectiveness of environmental policies and their implementation.

The EEA has responded to these requests by including policy implementation and policy effectiveness as an important new area of work in the new EEA Strategy 2004-2008. This includes the undertaking of policy effectiveness analysis for selected areas. The EEA does not have a role in monitoring compliance and enforcement of EU or national legislation.

## **2 USE OF INDICATORS IN REPORTING BY THE EEA**

Since its establishment, the EEA has used environmental indicators as a basis for reporting to policy makers in Europe. This is the case for indicator reports (e.g. Environmental Signals reports), thematic and sector reports (e.g. the Transport and Environment Reporting Mechanism reports); and state of the environment and outlook reports (including European Environment at the Turn of the Century, 1999; and Europe's Environment – the Third Assessment, 2003).

The Agency has also developed a typology of indicators, which include type A (descriptive indicators - what is happening to the environment and to humans?); type B (performance indicators - does it matter?); type C (efficiency indicators - are we improving?); and type D (total welfare indicators - are we on the whole better off?).

The EEA core set of environmental indicators was developed during a two-year consultation process with countries and is proposed for endorsement by March 2004. The proposed core set contains 37 indicators. The indicators have been selected on the basis of sound criteria widely used elsewhere in the EU and in OECD. All criteria are important but for the purposes of the EEA set, the most important are policy relevance, policy targets, readily available and routinely collected data, good geographical coverage and sufficient temporal coverage.

The EEA core set has three main purposes: (i) to provide a manageable and stable basis for indicator reporting by the EEA on the web and in its annual Environmental Signals report; (ii) to prioritise improvements in the quality and geographical coverage of data flows; and (iii) to streamline EEA contributions to other European and global indicator initiatives, e.g. structural indicators, sustainable development indicators, etc.

The core set will be stable but not static. There are many activities underway to improve data flows and indicator methodologies in support of policy needs and targets. Examples include the implementation of the Waste Statistics Regulation for the data across the waste hierarchy, ongoing work on biodiversity indicators to support the 2010 target, and the common implementation strategy of the water Framework Directive that will in time deliver data on ecological aspects.

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Indicators on the policy responses to environmental changes are still under development. This includes indicators of policy implementation and also indicators about the effectiveness of policies.

The EEA proposes to revisit the core set on an annual basis to consider whether indicators should be added, modified or deleted from the list.

### **3 POTENTIAL USEFULNESS FOR THE EEA FROM FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS**

The identification of and development of methodologies for indicators of policy implementation and effectiveness are potentially useful for reporting by the EEA.

First of all, such indicators could potentially provide a useful starting point for undertaking analysis related to and reporting on the implementation and effectiveness of policies in EEA member countries. Second, appropriate implementation and effectiveness indicators are useful for the EEA core set of indicators in order to better address and measure the policy responses.