



Techniques for Evaluation of Sustainability Assessment Tools (Sustainability A-Test)

Project

Research Program

[FP 6](#)

Duration

Mar 2004 - Aug 2006

In the course of the 6th Framework Programme, Ecologic participated in the "Sustainability A-Test" project. Coordinated by our Dutch network partner IVM, 18 research institutes from 9 different countries compared different policy appraisal and evaluation tools, in order to assess the contribution of policy initiatives to a sustainable development. In this project, Ecologic focused on monetary assessment tools as well as on Sustainability Impact Assessments.

To realize progress towards the ambitions on Sustainable Development, the EU and other actors should set wise objectives and make sure that the implementation is taken care of in an effective way. This requires proper policies and a consistent implementation process. To make decisions on which policies to develop and to re-view the progress made towards sustainable development goals, tools (i.e. methodologies, models, approaches and appraisals) are needed that support strategy development, ex-ante sustainability impact assessments as well as policy reviews.

This project assisted in improving both impact assessments and the sustainable development strategy definition by high level validation of the tools using a consistent and comprehensive evaluation framework.

The evaluation framework included issues such as the advantages and disadvantages of each tool, what they can and can not deliver, when they can be used, etc.

First, a draft evaluation framework and key aspects of sustainable development, against which the tools were evaluated, was formulated. A catalogue of state of the art tools was made and a preliminary evaluation of the tools in the context of different policy questions were carried out based on literature reviews. In this phase the project focused on agriculture & land-use policy questions.

Second, an array of tools was tested in a case study on agriculture and land-use.

Third, the results from the first two phases were used to derive a final evaluation framework that indicates how the tools relate, the merits of each tool, the circumstances under which they can be used, the constraints, the pros and cons and the extent to which they integrate externalities of policies.

The evaluation framework showed which tools are useful for answering which key aspects

of sustainable development and identified the trade-offs of using the different tools for addressing the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, environmental and social).

The project resulted in deeper insights for policy-makers and those carrying out sustainability impact assessments, provided guidance on which tools they can use best in decision-making or assessment processes, given the available resources and the desired scope of the process. This can clearly improve the quality of the decision-making or assessment process and thus improve sustainability assessments and the sustainable development strategy definition. This [framework](#) is accessible in the internet.

For **further information** see the [Sustainability A-Test brochure](#) [pdf, 152 KB, English] or the [Sustainability A-Test project website](#).

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