
Links Between the Social and Environmental Pillars of Sustainable Development

Project

Duration

Dec 2006 - Apr 2008

In the development of policy within the framework of sustainable development, economic, environmental and social considerations have to be taken into account. While the links between social and economic policies and between environmental and economic policies have been widely explored, little research has been done so far on the social-environmental interface. As part of an international consortium, Ecologic is doing pilot research to help improve the understanding of interactions between social policies and environmental policies, and to make use of synergies and avoid conflicts between the two policy areas.

The project aims to improve the knowledge basis on the interactions between social and environmental policies, and to help integrate efforts by policy-makers to reduce poverty, achieve economic progress, improve environmental protection and reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns. The research addresses the following questions:

- How do different population groups, through their consumption patterns, contribute to environmental pollution and consumption of environmental resources?
- Which population groups bear the most significant burden from environmental pollution, and what does this mean in the context of environmental equality or justice?
- What conflicts or synergies exist between environmental policies and social cohesion or inclusion policies at European level and for a number of case study countries?
- What indicators can be used to measure interaction between the two policy areas?

The work is based on an evaluation of statistical data from national and European sources, and on a number of case studies, which are carried out for Germany, the UK, the Czech Republic, Spain, Sweden and Bulgaria. Building on a common methodological framework, the case studies identify key issues from the national policy debate, and undertake analysis of policies and programmes at different level of government. An evaluation and comparison of the case studies and the EU level review was carried out in order to better understand the current policy interactions at the different levels of government (i.e. local, regional, national and European), and to explain how policy interactions can be developed to ensure that both social and environmental objectives are met without conflict.

Summary results of the project are available for download:

- [Study](#) [pdf, 503 KB, English]

The project results also served as input to a [conference](#) in February 2009, organised by the European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

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