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Establishing Environmental Sustainability Thresholds and Indicators

FINAL REPORT



[1]

Thresholds have to be defined and monitored via indicators

Knowing the limits of the planet's ability to provide resources and absorb pollutants is directly linked to debates on the limits to growth. Together with their partners from SERI, Ecologic Institute analysed environmental thresholds and associated indicators for monitoring unsustainable trends caused by human activity that could lead to the crossing of environmental thresholds in Europe. The areas covered are freshwater quality and quantity, soil erosion, and nonrenewable resource consumption. The report is available for download.

Environmental thresholds ("tipping points") show at which point an

ecologic system is likely to collapse due to external disruption. To avoid such an outcome it is necessary to identify the factors that lead to such developments. Especially policy makers need to know those tipping points to be able to react the best way at the right time.


Environmental thresholds have to be identified to provide a good definition. This is important because each tipping point needs to be addressed differently. They depend on the ecologic system that is involved as well as on the services it offers for the environment.

Indicators help to monitor and create treatments for tipping points. Currently there are few indicators established dealing with these problems. Indicators are an important aspect regarding the environmental and sustainable development policy of the European Union because they are necessary to identify "danger zones" - regions that might reach tipping points in the future.

The study tries to support EU policy by making progress on selected key thresholds. Furthermore it shows ways how thresholds can be identified, defined and monitored via indicators. It is focused on specific indicators and how they can be used.

The aim of the study was to detect unsustainable trends in the EU that could lead to threshold- or collapse-phenomena. For four chosen tipping points (health, fisheries, water, soil) indicators were established to support European policy decision makers in their work. The study also provides an interpretation for each indicator regarding its usability and efficiency.

Attachments

-  1750-32-establishing-environmental-thresholds-and-indicators-2010-srebotnjak.pdf

Main Link

Establishing Environmental Sustainability Thresholds and Indicators [pdf, 2.9 MB, English]

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Author(s)

Assoc. Prof. Tanja Srebotnjak, PhD
Sophie Herbert

Author(s)

Christine Polzin

Stefan Giljum
Stephan Lutter

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Table of Contents

Table of contents
Abbreviations
1. Introduction
2. Methodology
2.1. Literature Review
2.2. Selection of policy-relevant threshold areas
2.3. Establishing threshold indicators
2.4. DPSIR framework
3. Selected environmental threshold areas and their relevance for EU policies
3.1 State of the art in thresholds research: general findings
3.2 Health
3.3 Fisheries
3.4 Water Quality with Focus on Eutrophication
3.5 Water Quantity
3.6 Land use/Land use Change
3.7 Soil degradation
3.8 Non-renewable resources
4. Thresholds and indicators in selected areas
4.1 Water Quality with Focus on Eutrophication
4.2 Water Quantity
4.3 Soil erosion
4.4 Non-renewable resources
4. Conclusions
References

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Links

[1] <https://www.ecologic.eu/sites/files/presentation/2014/cover-tresholds-indicators-eu-srebotnjak-2010.jpg>

