



## Societal Impact of Sport and Environmental Initiatives

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### Abstract

The principle of environmental policy integration (EPI) attracts great scholarly interest as well as widespread political backing. Political support is particularly strong in the European Union, where it enjoys a prominent quasi-constitutional status. However, the practical fulfilment of EPI appears to lag well behind these aspirations, although the evidence base of this widely held view remains rather fragmented. This article aims to review the ‘state of the art’ in EPI research and practice from the perspective of its conceptual meaning, processes of implementation and outcomes ‘on the ground’. It finds that the political commitment to EPI is indeed widespread, especially in industrialized states, but that deep disagreement surrounds its actual application. In terms of everyday practices, ‘policy integration’ is complex and contingent, and there are few ‘best practices’ that can be easily shared between jurisdictions. Finally, knowledge about policy outcomes is very sparse indeed, and policy-making systems seem very ill prepared to address this lacuna.

**Keywords:** *environmental policy integration; sustainable development; policy evaluation; policy appraisal*

### Introduction

The next section turns to explore EPI as a governing process. Here we suggest two basic perspectives to order the existing literature: a political systems approach and a policy analysis approach. The former focuses on insights that can be derived from comparative country studies; the latter highlights the scope and effectiveness of different implementing measures. Many academics and policy makers consider EPI to be a policy-making ‘principle’ without reflecting too much on its meaning. In the EU, the political and legal salience of the principle suggests that the perceived need for clarity is vital. If EPI is primarily a policy objective whose role is to inspire either concrete legal rules or political programmes and activities, it does not form a suitable foundation for legal decisions.

On this matter, the literature is relatively well developed. Lafferty and his colleagues have done the most to pin down its meaning. Based on a close textual analysis of the Brandt



land Report they argue that its ‘mother concept sustainable development attributed ‘principled priority’ to environmental objectives in the process of ‘balancing’ economic, social and environmental concerns ‘The whole point of EPI’, they write, is ‘to avoid situations where environmental degradation becomes subsidiary and ensure that the long-term carrying capacity of nature becomes a *principal or overarching societal objective*’ Later, Lafferty and Knudsen argued that decisions should prioritize the environment by ensuring that ‘every effort is made to assess the impact of policy on the life-sustaining capacities of the affected ecosystem’.

### **EPI as a Process of Governing**

The observation that the strong normative interpretations of EPI have not been fully embedded into everyday political practices – not even in states that are considered environmental pioneers is rather sobering. In order to understand more fully the precise conditions under which EPI is given a ‘strong’ or a ‘weak’ positive meaning, analysts need to turn to the governing process that takes place inside political systems in which different actors interact and employ different combinations of policy instruments This process of pulling and hauling amongst the various sectoral actors can be studied from different analytical perspectives In the following we chose two points of departure: one that proceeds by comparing political systems, and another that is derived from a policy analysis approach and distinguishes between distinct phases of the policy-making process and/or between the different manifestations of policy instruments.

### **Political Systems Perspective**

There are numerous country studies of EPI ‘in action’. Implicitly or explicitly, they view EPI as a process that is anchored in a political system. In this view, EPI needs to be decided by political majorities; must be organized and managed; and finally should be maintained The structure of the prevailing political system the political context and the social, legal and administrative tradition of a polity ‘in concert’ may help to recognize the relevant dynamics for EPI. The remainder of this section looks at each one in turn.

From an *institutional* perspective, EPI is a multi-sectorial and multi-level coordination challenge it arises because contemporary – that is functionally differentiated governments organize their governance activities into sectorial ministries and decentralized agencies. These structures lead to a demand for organizational structures and procedures that are capable of delivering more coordinated governance amongst the various parts In practice, the existing literature identifies few jurisdictions in which policy integration has become an everyday organizational routine throughout all levels of decision making.



From a comparative perspective, it is nevertheless possible to divide jurisdictions into groups that are prone to suffer from institutional fragmentation and those that are more immune. In focusing on horizontal fragmentation, the existing literature distinguishes between political systems that feature more or less ministerial independence. For instance, the high level of ministerial independence in Germany reinforces sectorial thinking whereas the idea of ‘sector responsibility’ in Sweden ensures that individual ministries or government agencies take responsibility for incorporating supposedly common objectives into their operations. The German chancellor’s prerogative to define the guiding principles of governmental policy has not played an equally strong role in guiding and disciplining the sectorial ministries. Here, the prospects for ensuring EPI at the sectorial level have been heavily reliant upon the political composition of government. Approaching the issue of coordination from a vertical perspective, more federal systems

### **A Policy Analysis Perspective**

From this perspective, EPI consists of a set of measures that aim to change the process of sectorial policy making. Existing scholarship has tended to analyze the interactions between EPI measures and the pre-existing sectorial setting by focusing on particular *points* at which attempts are made to intervene in the standard policy cycle. Second, it has analyzed the different *mechanisms* or instruments of policy integration. Despite some very well-known weaknesses the stage based view of policy provides a readymade device to investigate the everyday processes of EPI. There are only a few jurisdictions that have really made their strategies and/or plans operational. Sweden stands out in this regard with its elaborate system of indicators and environmental quality objectives. Sustainable development strategies tend not to have had much effect on sectorial policy dynamics; environmental ministries and agencies remain their greatest supporters.

### **Various Logics of Intervention**

EPI instruments may also be ordered according to the *logic* of intervention. Following the analytical perspectives introduced above, it is possible to distinguish between institutional, political and cognitive logics. From an *institutional* perspective, While policy coordination via institutional means resonates well with the current preoccupation with ‘good governance’, the implementation of ‘rational’ structures and procedures can be a highly contentious matter, hence the importance of a more *political* perspective. At the administrative level, contention arises from distinct cultures and routines in the bureaucratic segments of an administration and from the ‘rational’ inclination of each part to protect its competences, resources and ways of



doing things from the intervention of other parts. It argues that the route to greater EPI is via the minds of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders. Whether and how these views change is a matter of great debate

### **EPI as a Policy Outcome**

Many environmentalists might well argue that principles are only principles, and process is only process; policy outcomes are what really matter. However, the measurement of outcome effectiveness is a very difficult task, and one that is not helped by the relative immaturity of this particular sub-field of evaluation research. In the case of EPI, the main 'subject' that is, the state of the environment now and in the long run is a highly complex matter, affected by a multitude of factors. Good data is hard to come by. Moreover, there are many different instruments that have been applied to deliver EPI as well as background factors such as economic and technological development, basic features of democracy the prevailing regulatory culture and levels of public opinion. From an instrument perspective, most OECD jurisdictions have undoubtedly done something in the name of EPI, but the overall pattern of adoption remains relatively uneven. The overall pattern of deployment has left some of the most environmentally vital areas of state activity namely planning and budgeting mostly unaffected.

### **Conclusions:**

In many ways, EPI constitutes one of *the* guiding axioms of green thinking and practice. Therefore, whether or not policy systems faithfully put it into practice is a matter of enormous importance to not only students of green politics but also policy practitioners too. Its aims are certainly nothing less than radical – to turn the policy status quo on its head, such that environmental protection involves a much more holistic and, above all, proactive search early on in the policy process for opportunities to prevent environmental damage from occurring. However, academic research on EPI only really began to take off in the late 1990s. In this article we have sought to review the state of the art and identify key trends in both academic thinking and policy practice. In terms of its core meaning, the existing literature points to widespread political commitment at a general discursive level in most industrialized states, but disagreement around its positive meaning in day-to-day decision making.

The emerging finding from most of the literature surveyed above is that the main point of contention in the political sphere is precisely *what* level of attention to give to



environmental protection in the sectors. The definition of integration (in the sense of what in practice to prioritize and to what extent) is, in other words, being continually questioned and thus the debate about its normative meaning continually reopened. EPI, in short, seems to take on a ‘positive’ meaning that is situational, i.e. different across jurisdictions, sectors and points in time. This suggests that the research on the normative underpinnings of EPI should continue to be supplemented with more research on its positive interpretation(s). As far as the process of governing is concerned, the existing literature has started to approach EPI from both a political system and a policy analysis perspective. The latest research is now beginning to take this basic finding and test it out at higher and lower levels of governance.

The next research challenge is to put all this material together and identify what facilitates and what impedes EPI within and across different levels of governance, given the well known tendency for policy at one level to interact with policy decisions taken at cognate levels. Work that examines EPI outside European settings would be particularly welcome in this respect. Finally, we have reviewed the rather more sparse literature on the outcomes of EPI processes ‘on the ground’. If policy outcomes are, as is often claimed, what really count in political life, then unfortunately the existing literature has amazingly little to say in this regard. More is known about some instruments than others but overall the evidence base is extremely sparse and policy-making systems themselves seem equally ill prepared to address this. Why has this situation come about? One explanation might be that many of the instruments used have simply not been around long enough to permit definitive assessments. For some instruments (for example, green budgeting), we simply do not have enough ‘cases’ to draw robust conclusions. Second, there are very significant conceptual and methodological obstacles to measuring the outcome of procedural and organizational instruments such as appraisal and green budgeting.

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