

Evaluating environmental public policies: *a democratic pillar to be strengthened*

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At a time when democracy is under threat and the environment seems to be taking a back seat, how can the evaluation of public environmental policies serve as a democratic pillar for our society?

Lack of anticipation, legitimacy and management

Assessing these policies is sometimes technically impossible because it has not been planned in advance, is not sufficiently perceived as legitimate, or is not used enough as a policy management tool. However, proper assessment is essential. For example, the underestimation of demand for social leasing for electric vehicles led the Government to suspend this scheme. This ‘stop and go’ effect, which partly undermines the objective and credibility of the approach, reveals that evaluation remains underused as a tool for steering the actions taken.

Mobilise all evaluation levers and stakeholders

Because environmental policies are implemented and often evaluated at the regional level, the ESEC has involved members of regional economic, social and environmental councils (CESER) and development councils (CODEV) in its work. To ensure effective steering, evaluation must be considered by stakeholders to be objective, transparent and comprehensible, i.e. democratically legitimate. The EESC calls for citizens to be involved in the definition, implementation and accountability of these policies, as this promotes their acceptability and strengthens their legitimacy.

The cost of inaction on climate change is

5 times

greater than the cost of taking action.

(source : World economic forum)

1 ENSURING THE FEASIBILITY OF ASSESSMENTS

→ How?

- **Anticipate** the evaluation by planning the following at the public policy design stage: the objectives to be evaluated, the indicators (relevant and sufficient in number), the processing of the necessary data, the timing of the policy and evaluation phases, the funding and the stakeholders involved in the evaluation.

2 STRENGTHEN THE DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY AND TRANSPARENCY OF EVALUATIONS

→ How?

- Establish, with clearly defined stakeholders, a decision-making steering committee or an advisory support committee to provide regular advice on the framework (evaluation questions, specifications), implementation and monitoring (data collection and analysis, interpretation, formulation of recommendations)..

3 INCREASING THE USEFULNESS OF EVALUATIONS IN PUBLIC DECISION-MAKING

→ How?

- Convince stakeholders that evaluation is neither a constraint nor a risk, but part of how democracy works through a process of continuous improvement.

- Formulate clear and practical conclusions/recommendations in the assessment (scenarios explaining the advantages and disadvantages) to **aid decision-making**.
- Ensure systematic follow-up of lessons learned from evaluations and responses to their recommendations. In certain cases, implement environmental policy in the form of a trial that can only be continued, adapted, rolled out or abandoned if it is evaluated after a defined period. Entrust CESERs with the task of reflecting on and proposing ways to improve the consistency of evaluation processes at the regional level.

Assessment: a tool for public debate and democracy

Assessments used in public debate help to improve the quality and acceptability of environmental policies. The EESC proposes that academic work be undertaken quickly to support a shared framework on the cost of inaction on environmental issues, to better inform the public about assessments via a national platform that centralises them, and to better integrate and make visible public feedback on assessments.

THE RAPPORTEURS

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