3 Environmental Policy Integration in Norway

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Introduction

*Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) and the Rio Summit provided important impetus to the process of environmental policy-making in OECD countries, and Norway was no exception. Perhaps the most important policy axiom to emerge from the UNCED process was that referred to as “Environmental Policy Integration” (EPI). Put simply, EPI involves “the placing [of] environmental considerations at the heart of the decision-making process in other sectors” (Haigh 2001: Section 3.1:1). Here, “other sectors” means policy sectors that do not have environmental protection as their primary concern, but whose activities nevertheless have considerable environmental impact, e.g. agriculture, transport, energy. EPI entails a systematic restructuring of the way in which environmental issues are handled by governments. Traditionally, a particular ministry or agency is assigned the role of “environmental watchdog”, a role that involved continuous pitched battles with sometimes powerful, but environmentally malign, sectoral interests. The UNCED process forms the basis of an approach that argues that environmental and developmental issues need to be considered together, as part and parcel of “sustainable development”. It is this integration of environmental concerns into the mainstream of politics in general, which signals the emergence of sustainable development as the guiding principle of societal development. With sustainable development, environmental policy has become much more than pollution control and protection of nature, it becomes a process of qualitative reappraisal of prevalent development patterns.

EPI did not emerge overnight, however. Already in 1972 the European Economic Community stipulated a more comprehensive EPI-like approach to environmental policy in its environmental action programme. However, it is not before the late 1990s that the European Union makes anything like a concerted effort to implement EPI through the so-called Cardiff Process (Kraemer 2000). In a United Nations context, *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987) provided the basic foundation for EPI in 1987, but it was not before the aftermath of the Rio Summit that the concept received any significant attention in policy-making circles. Gradually, however, many governments have begun processes that are supposed to ensure that environmental protection requirements are integrated into the decision-making fabric of non-environmental sectoral authorities. This chapter will evaluate the process as it has taken place in Norway. First, however, some clarification is needed with respect to the term EPI and the aim of this chapter.
Environmental Policy Integration

The integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas has been referred to as “environmental integration”, “environmental policy integration”, “sectoral integration”, or simply “integrating the environment into …”, etc. In this chapter, we will, for the sake of simplicity, follow Lenschow (1997, 1999) and use the term “environmental policy integration” – EPI. In Chapter 8 of Agenda 21, the need for the integration of environmental concerns into a range of different policy arenas is regularly mentioned. More specifically, this chapter is entitled “Integrating Environment and Development in Decision-making” and outlines four major integration themes: (1) the integration of environmental and developmental considerations in policy making, (2) providing an effective legal framework, (3) making effective use of economic instruments, and (4) establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting. Much like the conclusion of the Brundtland Report, we see that the integration of environmental concerns into economics is given priority, yet the integration of environmental concerns into policy-making in general is also elaborated upon. An ad hoc approach is viewed as insufficient, and there is an expressed need to accept environmental premises as important in all policy areas (UN 1993: Ch. 8.3).

The above quotation from Haigh’s well-known work does perhaps not settle the issue of definition once and for all. A few remarks on what we in this chapter understand by EPI may therefore be in order.

A good point of departure is perhaps how we believe EPI should not be approached. An example may here be drawn from the European Environmental Bureau’s (EEB) position paper Ten Benchmarks for Environmental Policy Integration (EEB 1999). In this paper, the EEB clearly sets out to establish indicators for EPI, yet these are eventually manifested as environmental performance indicators. This leads to a danger of confusing indicators for environmental performance with indicators for EPI. EPI is primarily a processes oriented concept, whose implementation is believed to facilitate sustainable development. A sector may score very well with respect to environmental performance indicators, yet this may not tell us much about EPI. We might assume that EPI should be relatively strong in a sector that scores high on environmental performance indicators, but such positive scores could be a result of factors that have little or nothing to do with the implementation of EPI. If we were to take EEB’s approach in an evaluation of Norway’s efforts for EPI, all that would be required would be to look at the main environmental performance indicators. If these are positive, then EPI would have taken place. Conversely, EPI would have been unsuccessful if the indicators were negative. However, this leaves EPI with no substantive content beyond “good environmental policy”, and places unlimited faith in the theory that EPI actually is an effective environmental policy instrument. While the UNCED process admittedly takes the effectiveness of EPI for granted, it may not be wise to act as if this actually is the case. A much better approach to EPI would be to identify EPI independent of substantial environmental performance by focussing on the process of EPI. One may then determine whether or not EPI has taken place, and this would become the basic criterion for evaluation regarding this particular chapter of Agenda 21. Subsequently, it would be necessary to examine the link between the degrees of EPI and actual environmental performance, but this is not something we will pursue in this chapter.

In order not to fall into the tautological trap illustrated above (good environmental policy = EPI, EPI = good environmental policy), we need a definition of EPI that is
independent of substantial environmental performance indicators. Lafferty and Hovden (2002) have discussed the definition of EPI in some detail and arrived at a relatively elaborate definition of EPI that brings together features from several different definitions:

- the incorporation of environmental objectives into all stages of policymaking in non-environmental policy sectors, with a specific recognition of this goal as a guiding principle for the planning and execution of policy,
- accompanied by an attempt to aggregate presumed environmental consequences into an overall evaluation of policy, and a commitment to minimise contradictions between environmental and sectoral policies by giving priority to the former over the latter.

Such a definition has two main elements that need to be highlighted. First, it emphasises that environmental objectives need to be brought in as part of the decision-making premises for non-environmental policies. The more this is achieved, the more EPI. Second, it is important to note that there is an implicit policy hierarchy in the entire thinking around EPI. Environmental concerns should be brought in and affect non-environmental policies, and not vice versa. Nor is it a case of integrating two types of policy, where each policy gives and takes approximately as much as the other. It is clear that the environmental objectives are, to a significant degree, principal: it is these objectives that EPI is supposed to secure.

This chapter will be concerned with the integration of environmental policy into other sector policies. One disadvantage with EPI is that it may be taken to signify an environmental policy objective not clearly connected to broader sustainable development objectives. However, it is quite clear that successful EPI is an essential and indispensable part of the concept of sustainable development. While EPI does not in itself constitute sustainable development, it is a necessary, but not in itself sufficient, component of sustainable development. The integration of broader sustainable development objectives into each sectoral policy area is, of course, an even more demanding process than EPI, and this should be kept in mind in the context of the evaluation found towards the end of this chapter. Agenda 21 appears to call for such a broad integration of sustainable development objectives. A full evaluation of the integration of ecological, social and economic factors in all Norwegian Government policy is, however, a task far beyond the scope of this chapter. Further, Our Common Future identifies physical sustainability as a minimum (but by no means sufficient) requirement for sustainable development (Lafferty and Langhelle 1999: 6; WCED 1987: 43). To take EPI as a starting point is, therefore, in accordance with the concept of sustainable development, and in this chapter we will therefore limit the discussion to the integration of environmental policy concerns into other sectoral policies.

As a final remark regarding the concept of EPI, it is worth pointing to Lafferty and Hovden’s analytical framework for EPI. Here, EPI is given two dimensions (Lafferty and Hovden 2002): one vertical, which concerns the extent to which individual sectors have integrated environmental objectives in their portfolio of objectives, and one horizontal dimension that concerns the integration of environmental concerns in the overall, cross-sectoral strategy of a government’s political programme. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The two dimensions are equally important in securing full and comprehensive EPI in a country’s policy for sustainable development. Each sector needs to employ appropriate instruments to ensure that EPI is completed. However, it
is just as important that there is comprehensive overall policy integration by central government, which ensures that inevitable conflicts of interests and questions of political priorities are effectively addressed. The horizontal dimension also needs to facilitate appropriate political legitimacy for the entire EPI process, so that this work may run more smoothly in the sectors (Lafferty 2001: 10-11).

![Environmental Policy Integration: Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions](image)

**Norwegian EPI Initiatives 1988-2001**

In the following, we will discuss the main EPI initiatives in Norway in the period 1988 to 2001. We have highlighted the most important types of initiatives, whose successful implementation would clearly contribute significantly to EPI. These are presented more or less chronologically, beginning with White Paper 46 (MoE 1989) and concluding with the initiatives proposed in White Paper 58 (MoE 1997).

**White Paper 46**

White Paper 46 (MoE 1989) – the Government’s follow-up to *Our Common Future* – presented relatively ambitious objectives as regards EPI. It launched a new integrated approach to environmental policy, requiring a reform of the environmental administration and policy development. The prime instrument for implementing EPI, in the aftermath of White Paper 46 and until White Paper 58 appeared ten years later, was the reporting procedure related to the annual *Environmental Profile of the State Budget*. The use of the Environmental Profile has developed over time, but, in essence, was intended to have two functions. First, the reporting procedure relating to the Environmental Profile should give an overview of budget funds connected to environmental purposes within the administrative domains of the ministries. Second, the ministries should use the Environmental Profile to present the main environmental challenges, targets, and initiatives planned for implementation the following year. Where possible, the ministries should also describe the effects of the initiatives and
budget allocations which had been presented in the State Budget the two preceding years (Riksrevisjonen 1999: 13). However, the Environmental Profile suffered from a number of weaknesses. Most importantly, the criteria for classifying the budgetary funds with an environmental profile were unclear, leading to different classifications by different ministries. It also led to some quite bizarre results, especially in the early days, as discussed by Nøttestad (1999: 133). In one instance, for example, the environmental profile of the Ministry of Defence argued that virtually all their spending was environment related, since most of their activities could be related to the aim of preventing nuclear war, and nuclear war is clearly bad for the environment.

The directives for classifying budgetary funds became clearer during the 1990s, as the ministries gained experience with the process. However, as recently as in 1999, the Office of the Auditor General of Norway (Riksrevisjonen 1999: 23-24) pointed out that it was difficult to compare environmental efforts across ministries because of considerable variation in how some ministries practiced the classification. Furthermore, the targets and initiatives in each ministry’s budget had been of a more general character than required by White Paper 46. Most of the ministries had established some targets, but these had tended to be of a very general character and without specific timetables for implementation (Hille 1997: 97; Torjussen 2002: 67). As a consequence, implementation was difficult to monitor, and the Environmental Profile has thus remained a weak strategic process for EPI.

Today, most ministries still present the allocations of budgetary funds for environmental purposes through a similar procedure to that of the Environmental Profile of the State Budget, but there have been some changes in the way in which the allocations are classified. Initiatives are now to be classified as environmental initiatives only if the whole allocation is used for environmental improvement; if environmental concern is decisive for implementing the initiatives, or if the allocation is intended to prevent new environmental problems from occurring (MoE 2001a: 14).

White Paper 46 included a proposal to develop indicators for measuring progress in achieving sectoral environmental targets, and, although this work has not been completed, it remains part of the current ongoing efforts for EPI. We will return to this in the discussion of White Paper 58 below.

Inter-ministerial Committees and Groups

Throughout the 1990s, Norwegian authorities established a number of different inter-ministerial committees and groups to address issues relating to sustainable development. Some of these groups have been ad hoc, with responsibility for reporting on single issues such as environmental taxes, climate policy, environmental instruments, biodiversity and sustainable consumption (Sverdrup 1998: 195). The intention has been to build consensus around particular problems and how they should be addressed. An Official Norwegian Report (NOU) from 1995 showed that, up to that point, the initiatives had been successful in reducing conflicts and laying a foundation for inter-ministerial cooperation. However, Sverdrup points out that cooperation is partly based on the ministries’ willingness to prioritise environmental interests over sectoral interests. The Ministry of the Environment (MoE) does not exercise absolute power in such cases and is forced to negotiate with other ministries about objectives and strategies.
In addition to such *ad hoc* groups, a number of more permanent committees have been established. Among them are the State Secretary Committee for Environmental Issues, the National Committee for Sustainable Development and the National Committee for International Environmental Issues.

**The State Secretary Committee for Environmental Issues**

In 1989, the Government established the State Secretary Committee for Environmental Issues (SUM) as a forum for inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination on environmental policy. The Committee was involved in developing methods to achieve better coordination of a comprehensive environmental policy and acted as a valuable forum where inter-ministerial conflicts could be resolved at a lower level before reaching cabinet level. The Committee has also discussed possible improvements in the Environmental Profile of the State Budget. On a number of occasions, discussions in the Committee have led to changes in budget priorities, resulting in increased funding for environment related items. Meetings have generally been held monthly, providing a stable framework for cooperation (Sverdrup 1998: 195). For reasons we have not been able to determine, however, the Committee was dissolved by the Labour Government of Jens Stoltenberg in 2000.

**The National Committee for Sustainable Development**

By 1997, 150 countries had established national commissions on sustainable development or other national coordinating bodies. These were initiated in order to develop an integrated approach to sustainable development and include civil society in the process of developing strategies and agendas. A number of the commissions existed prior to 1992, but 90 per cent of them were initiated following the Rio Summit (CSD 1997). In Norway, two coordinating bodies were established. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these bodies were the Committee for Sustainable Development and the National Committee for International Environmental Questions (MoFA 1997).

The National Committee for Sustainable Development was established in 1990 by the Centre-Right Government of Jan P. Syse. The Committee had a relatively high political profile and broad participation, as it was chaired by the Prime Minister and had different ministers and representatives from NGOs as members. According to the mandate, the Committee was to promote sustainable development by integrating environmental concerns into public and private activities. Another task was to build national and international consensus and alliances between the Government, business sector, trade unions, research sector, voluntary organizations, and youth. Hence, the mandate was quite vague, and the Committee had considerable freedom to decide its own agenda and work.

In the period 1990-93, many meetings were held where topics such as climate change, energy, environmental taxes, Norwegian preparations for the Rio Summit, and follow-up of the meeting were discussed. The Committee appears to have functioned primarily as a forum for exchanging information and discussion, although some of the meetings resulted in more concrete proposals and follow-up. There seems to have been some disagreement among the committee members as to how the Committee should work.
The former Minister of the Environment, Thorbjørn Berntsen, has commented that one of the reasons why the Committee was disbanded was that the representatives of business and labour became “tired of listening to the doomsday prophecies of the environmental movement”. This does suggest that the relationship between the NGOs and the other participants may have become rather strained as the Committee’s work progressed, something which is confirmed by the committee representative of the Norwegian Friends of the Earth, Dag Hareide, who believes that the poor relationship between the Government and the environmental movement may have been one of the reasons behind why the Committee was discontinued (Hareide 2001, [telephone interview]). It has not been possible to establish exactly why and when the Committee ceased to function, but there is no record of meetings after 1993.

As mentioned, the Committee functioned primarily as a forum for exchanging information and discussion, and it is questionable whether the Committee had a significant effect on the implementation of sustainable development in Norway. As a consequence, we may also conclude that the integration visions in its mandate were not realized.

The National Committee for International Environmental Questions

This Committee was established in 1993 and is still active. As with the National Committee for Sustainable Development, participation is broad and includes representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office, various ministries and representatives from some NGOs. The meetings are chaired by the Minister of the Environment (MoE 1993).

The Committee functions as an important forum for dialogue and exchange of information. International issues such as the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity, bilateral environmental cooperation with Eastern Europe, meetings in the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and national preparation for these meetings have been on the agenda. During the last two years, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002 has been a major topic of discussion. The mandate of the Committee is focussed on international developments in the area of environment and development, and not Norwegian implementation of Agenda 21.

Minutes from the meetings show that the mandate has been followed up quite closely, and the Committee has been a forum where the status of various international negotiations has been in focus, while Norwegian follow-up has been more or less absent. While the Committee certainly is a cross-sectoral coordinating body, it does not to any significant degree concern itself with the coordination of national implementation of Agenda 21.

Environmental Assessments

Norwegian authorities have introduced two types of environmental assessment. One is Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which concerns the environmental impact of specific projects. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), on the other hand,
is concerned with the environmental consequences of policies, plans and, programme initiatives. Both EIA and SEA are concerned with environmental consequences, but, while EIA apply to specific projects, SEA applies to broader policy concerns. In Norway, steps have been taken to apply SEA to all proposals submitted to the King in Council, the Cabinet, and Parliament. Agenda 21 recommends the use of both types of environmental assessment in national policy (UN 1993: 66).

The requirement to carry out EIA for certain projects is an international trend whereby principles and regulations to strengthen environmental considerations in relation to decision-making have been developed. In Norway, EIA was incorporated in the Planning and Building Act in 1990, and regulations regarding EIA were strengthened in 1996 as a result of an EU directive on EIA. As per 2000, 449 projects have been subject to EIA, most commonly projects relating to ore and gravel extraction, development of light industry, construction of service and public buildings, road building, and energy production (OECD 2001: 37). EIA has also been used on projects likely to have a trans-boundary impact. Provisions on EIA in a trans-boundary context were incorporated into the Norwegian regulations when they were revised in 1999 (CSD 2000).

Petroleum operations are also subject to EIA at several stages in the planning and development process. This is pursuant to the Petroleum Act of 1985, and the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy are responsible for implementation. The EIA is presented to Parliament when decisions are made regarding development (OECD 2001: 130-131).

Despite the fact that an expansion of traditional EIA principles to policy-level may be somewhat problematic, Norway has also taken steps towards implementing SEA. In Norway and internationally, SEA is viewed as an important tool for achieving sustainable development (Husby 1997: 10, 20). According to an Administrative Order of 1994 (ibid.: 16-19), not only administrative and economic effects, but also “significant” environmental effects of all proposals submitted to the King in Council, the Cabinet, and Parliament must be assessed by the ministry responsible for the proposal, and the Ministry of the Environment must be consulted in this process (ibid.: 17-19). In 2000, this Administrative Order was replaced by a new order, which is quite similar in terms of the provisions for SEA (MoLGA 2000). Both the new and the old are quite general in character, and leave significant room for interpretation with respect to what policies or projects should be subject to assessment (Torjussen 2002: 74). However, it is the practice of environmental assessments that is the ultimate measure of success.

Husby (1997) has completed a study of all the Official Norwegian Reports (NOU), White Papers, and Government Proposals to the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) for the years 1995-1997. The study concludes that 66 (approximately 10 per cent) of these documents would be appropriate for environmental assessment. Out of 66 cases, as many as 62 contained references to the environment. However, the qualitative evaluation of these environmental assessments is less flattering (ibid.: 11):

- There are relatively few cases, with the exception of project-type cases, which include an explicit discussion of the environmental impact of the policy proposal.
- Most of the documents contain a discussion of environmental objectives in connection with the policy area. The amount of detail in these discussions vary considerably, and, in some of them, environmental objectives seem like ‘late additions’ and somewhat lacking in relation to the discussion of policy formulation.
Most of the documents contain a general mention of environmental challenges and consequences in connection with the policy area. Only a few cases include status reports that say *sic* anything about the extent of the effects. Specification with regards to the environmental domain is often lacking.

Many cases contain proposal elements that are founded on environmental considerations.

As can be seen, environmental consequences of the *policy area*, and not the consequences of *proposed changes* appear to be in focus. It is therefore questionable whether environmental assessments actually have any *strategic* character, in that consequences of, and alternatives to, projects or policies are not elaborated upon. However, it must be stressed that not all types of documents are suitable for EIA. Husby (1997: 51) refers to this as a dilemma: Ideally, environmental concerns should be assessed at an early stage in the policy process, when different policy alternatives are still being discussed. On the other hand, in an early phase, it would often be difficult to assess environmental consequences, since the implications of the policy or the project may be unclear.

White Paper 58

The Intentions of White Paper 58

The most recent major policy document for EPI dates from 1997, when the Government issued White Paper 58 (MoE 1997) (*Miljøvernpolitikk for en bærekraftig utvikling: Dugnad for framtida*). The White Paper effectively reiterated the message of White Paper 46, and reconfirmed EPI as a major challenge for environmental policy-making. A number of almost 10-year old proposals from White Paper 46 were re-cycled, but new initiatives were also launched. Much like White Paper 46, White Paper 58 stressed the importance of the sector-encompassing approach. However, compared to White Paper 46, the new paper went a step further. To make environmental responsibility more visible, targets and initiatives were to be presented in Sectoral Environmental Action Plans (SEAP). The SEAPs should have a four-year perspective and be based on principles such as management-by-objectives and cost-effectiveness across sectors. Furthermore, the Government once again launched a system for documentation of environmental results (RDS). This system was intended to provide information about the state of the environment, human influence on the environment, and how environmental initiatives were carried out. The results were to be presented in an annual (later bi-annual) White Paper entitled *The Government’s Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment* (MoE 1999, 2001a).

However, White Paper 58 (MoE 1997) did not describe in detail how to develop a system for documentation of environmental results and sectoral environmental action plans. This detail is to be found in two subsequent white papers: White Paper 8 (MoE 1999) and White Paper 24 (MoE 2001a). These are part of the series of White Papers entitled *The Government’s Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment*, or RM Papers. White Paper 24 provides the following summary of the new integrated approach (MoE 2001a: 18, [our translation]):

– For each of the eight target areas, long term strategic objectives for the environmental policy will be outlined. These will be specified by measurable national targets with time tables. Sectoral targets will be set on the basis of the national targets.

– The state of the environment and factors which cause changes in the state of the environment are to be monitored with reference to national key figures (*nasjonale nøkkeltall*) … ¹⁴ These key figures will also indicate the progress with respect to the strategic objectives and national targets of the environmental policy. The key figures will as far as possible be in the White Paper [RM-Paper], and will also be used for international reporting … .

– Each ministry will be responsible for developing a sectoral environmental action plan … . These plans will present sectoral environmental challenges, targets, policies, and initiatives within the eight environmental target areas … .

– The sectoral ministries will annually report to the environmental authorities on the state of the environment in their sectors. This will also include reports about initiatives and measures which have been implemented. The environmental reports from the sectoral ministries will be an important basis for the White Paper *The Government’s Environmental Profile and the State of the Environment*.

The reports from the ministries are to be used in a national RDS. The RDS will provide information regarding the state of the environment, changes in environmental impact and implemented initiatives at a national level. The main intention is to collect and structure the information necessary for administering environmental policy in an efficient and suitable manner. In addition to reports from the ministries, environmental monitoring and statistics will be the foundation for the RDS. When the data has been collected and analyzed, the results will be published in the RM Paper and in international reports (SFT 2002a; 2002b).

Together, the sectoral environmental action plans and the system for documentation of environmental results are intended to constitute an integrated system of targets, policies, monitoring, and control. With the planning of these initiatives, the Government in 1997 signalled a much more ambitious environmental policy and EPI. However, implementing the initiatives of White Paper 58 has proven to be a considerable challenge.

*The Implementation of White Paper 58*

The Government has made significant progress with respect to the implementation of the main initiatives of White Paper 58. In White Paper 8 (MoE 1999), strategic objectives and national targets were presented for each of the eight target areas. These targets have been followed up with national key figures, and environmental monitoring is now concentrated on the targets and key figures. Furthermore, 12 ministries have developed sectoral action plans, where they have described environmental challenges within their sectors and presented targets and initiatives to deal with them. Regarding the RDS, the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority (SFT) has presented an electronic test model for the Ministry of the Environment. This model presents the structure of
RDS and how the system may function in the future (SFT 2002c). The intention is that the ministries will, in time, put their own data into a similar model.

The first impression with respect to the implementation of White Paper 58 is therefore very good: most of the main procedural initiatives outlined appear to have been implemented. However, this impression is seriously challenged if we look at the substance of how the procedural initiatives in question have actually been carried out. Regarding the national objectives, which have been developed in the eight target areas, these vary considerably with respect to the quality of the targets. Some targets are quite vague and lack timetables for implementation. In a strategy document, this is quite a serious deficiency and makes evaluation difficult, since it may prove difficult to determine the extent to which targets have been achieved.

Recently, the national targets have been followed up by key figures. While indicators have existed for some time, they have not been organised in a systematic manner comparable to the current system of key figures (see also Nordskag’s chapter in this book). Today, we have key figures for almost all the national targets (MoE 2001a: 129-141). However, there appears to be insufficient data available in some areas, and, as a consequence, progress with respect to some key figures is difficult to measure. This is especially true for areas relating to the Directorate for Nature Management (DM) (SFT 2001a [telephone interview]). Data availability is an obvious precondition for the key figures to serve their purpose.

These problems notwithstanding, it can be concluded that some progress has been made at the national level regarding the RDS. A basis has been set upon which national targets can be broken down to sectoral targets. The next step is to see how this is followed up in the sectoral environmental action plans. Clearly, this has been difficult. Many of the sectoral targets are very vague in character and lack time-tables (Statskonsult 2001: 37; Torjussen 2002: 59-63). In addition, the extent to which a specific ministry actually takes responsibility for the implementation of a specific target varies. There are many pledges to “contribute” to the solution of a variety of environmental problems, but this begs the questions of “how?” and “how much?” each sector should do. Thus, it becomes difficult to see how much responsibility the different ministries will take for realizing national targets. In other words, sectoral responsibility is not as visible as presupposed in White Paper 58.

Another serious shortcoming, pointed out by Statskonsult, is the lack of reference to the National Budget in the SEAPs (Statskonsult 2001: 37). The original intention was that each sectoral initiative should be connected to a specific item in the annual budget of the sector ministry. This was supposed to ensure that initiatives were not proposed without adequate funding. However, with respect to the SEAPs issued so far, this has generally not been the case. This can probably be explained by the poor correspondence between the general character of the SEAPs and the much more concrete nature of the budget.

A number of the other principles in White Paper 58 have also been difficult to make operational. As discussed previously, sectoral environmental action plans should be based on the principles of management-by-objectives. Since many of the sectoral environmental action plans lack concrete targets and timetables, it has proven difficult to measure the extent to which the targets have been achieved. Furthermore, this principle presupposes that targets are followed up by initiatives and policies. Many ministries claim that they often lack their own sector specific instruments for environmental policy (ibid.: 14), which makes committing to an environmental policy target difficult. This is clearly a further obstacle to making the principle of management-by-objectives operational.
Finally, it is worth noting that White Paper 58 proposed cross-sectoral analyses of cost-effectiveness (tverrektorielle tiltaksanalyser) to determine where the most cost-effective initiatives could be pursued with respect to a given environmental problem (MoE 1997: 27). White Paper 8 repeated the pledge to complete these analyses (MoE 1999: 13), but by White Paper 24, the initiative had disappeared from the plans for EPI (the actual table is identical to that appearing in White Paper 8, but the cross-sectoral cost-effectiveness analysis was omitted as an initiative) (MoE 2001a). In some areas, cross-sectoral cost-effectiveness analyses have been completed, for example with respect to climate change (SFT 2001b [telephone interview]). However, whether or not more analyses are to follow as part of the SEAPs, is, as per today, unclear.

To summarize, the current environmental action plans are suffering from a number of weaknesses that make it difficult to realize the ambitions of White Paper 58. However, the current plans have served some purpose. Most of the ministries claim that the planning process has been useful in putting environmental issues on the agenda and by contributing to a more comprehensive approach to environmental policy (Statskonsult 2001: 3).

Evaluation

Agenda 21 and Norwegian Objectives

The introductory chapter to this book outlines two types of evaluation criteria: external and internal. In what follows, a selection of the most central objectives and initiatives of Agenda 21 will be outlined as external criteria. This selection is necessary, as Chapter 8 is quite extensive and, at times, quite repetitive. For each of the initiatives and objectives presented, the relevant Norwegian initiatives will be summarized and their implementation discussed in the light of international commitments and national ambitions.

There are four main programme areas under Chapter 8 of Agenda 21: (a) integrating environment and development at policy, planning, and management levels, (b) providing an effective legal and regulatory framework, (c) making effective use of economic instruments and market forces, and other incentives, and (d) establishing systems for integrated environmental, economic accounting (UN 1993: 65-74). Our main concern and focus is programme area (a), as successful implementation of this necessarily affects the other programme areas in a positive manner.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reviews

Regarding monitoring, evaluation, and reviews, Chapter 8 of Agenda 21 calls for, inter alia:

Monitoring and evaluating the development process systematically and conducting regular reviews of the state of human resources development, economic and social conditions and trends and the state of the environment and natural resources; this could be complemented by annual environment and development reviews, with a view to assessing sustainable development achievements by the various sectors and departments of Governments (UN 1993: 66).
Norway has responded to this through the initiatives proposed in White Paper 58, and, more specifically, through the RDS. This system should ensure monitoring and evaluation of the state of the environment through the use of key figures, an annual environment review (the now bi-annual RM Paper), and assessment of environmental achievements by the various sectors through the system for documentation of environmental results.

Hence, the Norwegian initiatives are to a considerable extent in tune with Agenda 21, as there is a close correspondence between internal and external criteria. One important difference, however, is that Agenda 21 consistently refers to sustainable development, while the Norwegian initiatives are limited to environmental policy. More importantly, perhaps, the Norwegian system is limited to environmental issues and does not include a broader natural resources monitoring system, which Agenda 21 also calls for (ibid.: 1993: 72). Statistics Norway issues an annual report on natural resources and the environment. This covers trends in the extraction and use of natural resources and changes in the state of the environment, thereby, to some extent, satisfies the requirements of Agenda 21. However, it is fairly limited and cannot be said fully to comprise a “[system] of accounts for natural resources” as called for in Agenda 21, nor is it connected to the financial budgeting and accounting process (Hille 1997: 78).

Regarding the actual Norwegian performance with respect to monitoring, evaluation, and review, we have, in this chapter, discussed the implementation of the system for documentation of environmental results. The system clearly has great potential, but is still in a pilot phase, ten years after the meeting in Rio. Thus, one may conclude that, during the period under evaluation in this chapter, the Norwegian Government has not fully implemented a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and review system of environmental performance, not to mention sustainable development. However, the prospects for the next ten years look distinctly more positive.

**Accountability of Sectoral Policies**

With respect to the sector specific work for sustainable development, Agenda 21 calls for, *inter alia:*

> Ensuring transparency of, and accountability for, the environmental implications of economic and sectoral policies (UN 1993: 66).

Norway has responded to this item in Agenda 21 by introducing regular Sectoral Environmental Action Plans (SEAPs). Here, there is a high degree of correspondence between the external criteria of Agenda 21 and the initiative proposed by the Norwegian Government in White Paper 58 in 1997, and specified in subsequent White Papers. SEAPs were intended to make the environmental implications of sectoral policies more transparent and assign responsibility for the implications to each sectoral ministry.

Regarding Norwegian performance in this area, we have, in this chapter, discussed how SEAPs have fared. The conclusion is that, at present, they represent only a promising beginning and need substantial improvement. While SEAPs have made the environmental consequences of each sector’s activity more visible, and this in itself is an achievement, there appears to be no framework in place within which each sector can take active responsibility for the environmental effects of its activity. Objectives and targets are vague, and the links between objectives and initiatives remain unclear.
According to Statskonsult, the Government’s environmental administration has not communicated clearly enough how the ministries should break down general national targets to the sectoral level. This is related to the lack of a fully operational system for documentation of environmental results, the RDS. In the future, it is clearly important that environmental action plans are linked to the RDS and analyses of environmental initiatives across sectors. This will be the most important initiative in terms of making SEAPs more concrete and effective for environmental governance.

Two final comments are in order with respect to the SEAPs. First, SEAPs are not as yet linked to the budgetary process in a satisfactory manner. Second, and perhaps more seriously, there appears to be no system in place for conducting reviews or audits of SEAPs. Given that it is a well recognized fact that SEAPs could be improved, it seems obvious that an audit or review system could prove very useful in terms of ensuring progressively higher quality and more ambitious targets for future SEAPs. The Ministry of the Environment has plans to complete some sort of review of SEAPs after all the ministries have completed their first “round” of SEAPs towards the end of 2002 (MoE 2002a). What this review will entail is not yet known, but it appears that it will be carried out on an ad hoc basis, and does not, therefore, seem to be the beginning of a more comprehensive and regular review process.

Project and Policy Assessments

With respect to environmental assessment, Agenda 21 calls for the following activity:

> Adopting comprehensive analytical procedures for prior and simultaneous assessment of the impacts of decisions, including the impacts within and among the economic, social and environmental spheres; these procedures should extend beyond the project level to policies and programmes; analysis should also include an assessment of costs, benefits and risks (UN 1993: 66).

In this area, Norway has performed relatively well, despite a lack of specific national ambitions laid down in policy documents. White Paper 46 (MoE 1989) mentions an ambition to introduce environmental assessments, but this is treated very briefly and no specific ambitions are elaborated upon. The internal criteria are therefore quite weak. However, actual Norwegian practice corresponds well with at least parts of the intentions of Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 calls for sustainable development assessments of projects, policies, and programmes. In Norway, this has been limited to environmental assessment, not sustainable development assessment. However, the environmental assessments have included elements of both EIA and SEA.

Regarding environmental assessments, a large number of EIAs have been completed, based on the legal requirements laid down primarily in the Plan and Building Act. The institutional aspects are therefore quite strong. However, as we have seen, the actual implementation of EIA shows clear room for improvement. The OECD points out that the general quality of the EIA documents is good, but, significantly, also points to weaknesses regarding the handling of alternatives or mitigating initiatives for the projects (OECD 2001: 37). The tendency to report on general environmental impacts of the policy area rather than proposed changes to programmes appears to be a serious deficiency with SEA. This suggests that although the formal and institutional structures
of both EIA and SEA are in place, substantial implementation of actual assessments leaves considerable room for improvement.

**Cross-sectoral, Horizontal Integration**

Several times, Agenda 21 stresses the importance of an all-encompassing integrative mechanism to ensure that a cross-sectoral approach forms the basis for decisions. For example, Agenda 21 calls for countries to:

> Adopt a domestically formulated policy framework that reflects a long term perspective and cross sectoral approach as the basis for decision … (UN 1993: 66).

And not to forget that:

> Governments, in cooperation, where appropriate, with international organisations, should adopt a national strategy for sustainable development based on inter alia the implementation of the decisions taken at the Conference, particularly in respect to Agenda 21. This strategy should build on and harmonise the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans that are operating in the country (UN 1993: 67).

In this area, Norwegian efforts are least impressive, and the Norwegian interpretation of EPI appears to differ clearly from that of Agenda 21. As regards internal criteria on this point, there are few explicit criteria to choose from. Despite this, there have been activities in accordance with the external criteria. In this chapter, we have seen that a number of inter-ministerial groups and committees have been in operation during the 1990s. Most of these have been ad hoc and reported on particular policies or single issues. While this is clearly a positive development which has also had substantial impact on policy developments in Norway (e.g. the Green Tax Commission and the Quota Trading Commission), it can be argued that there is a dimension to the integration process, concerning the horizontal dimension of EPI, that has not been addressed. As we understand Agenda 21, the call for a policy framework based on a cross-sectoral approach and national strategies for sustainable development specifically address the need for horizontal integration, steering, and coordination. The State Secretary Committee for Environmental Issues and the National Committee for Sustainable Development, discussed above, are examples of cross-sectoral steering and coordination bodies that could, theoretically, strengthen the horizontal integration of environmental policy. However, both of these bodies have now been disbanded, and no new bodies appear to have been established as replacements. Today, there is, therefore, no national high-level body with overall responsibility for either EPI or the implementation of Agenda 21.

Another initiative that could theoretically improve cross-sectoral horizontal integration would be a fully operational system for documentation of environmental results, the RDS. However, as we have seen, this has to date not come beyond the pilot stage. Nor have cross-sectoral cost-effectiveness analyses been utilised as a central policy tool. Effectively implemented, however, both of these initiatives could contribute significantly to a more successful integration policy.

The strategy for sustainable development it is perhaps the weakest point in the entire Norwegian policy for sustainable development. This has not been discussed above in
the outline of main initiatives, because no strategy for sustainable development has been presented. In the spring of 2002, a draft document was circulated by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for comment by stakeholders (MoE 2002). However, this document was so “patchy” that it was not possible to comment on its content. The intention of the Government is, however, to have a strategy in place in good time before the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. In any case, the requirements of Agenda 21 regarding the process of producing a strategy have not been fulfilled, as participation by civil society and stakeholders in the process has been very limited. This is also, however, a function of the fact that work on the strategy was initiated at a very late stage, creating immense time pressure on the completion process.

The absence of a strategy for sustainable development has meant that a great opportunity for improved horizontal integration has been missed. A strategy could in theory contribute significantly by discussing and drawing up broad priorities with respect to conflicts of interest between environmental objectives and other sectoral objectives. Furthermore, the conflicting objectives that inevitably emerge when integrating environmental policy in other sectors could be highlighted, and, thus, prepare the ground for crucial political choices with respect to sustainable development in Norway. White Paper 58 is a strategic document for environmental policy, but it specifically states that it is a White Paper on environmental policy for sustainable development, and not a White Paper for sustainable development (MoE 1997: 9). Thus, White Paper 58 is not a document suited to the overall horizontal cross-sectoral strategic function that a sustainable development strategy could have.

The setting of national targets for environmental policy could also contribute significantly to the horizontal dimensions of EPI. In White Paper 58, the responsibility to set sectoral targets is not specified, but in documents from the MoE the responsibility appears to be divided between sectoral ministries and the MoE (MoE 2001b: 18-19). This is a development away from the system proposed in White Paper 46 (MoE 1989: 72), which stipulated that the Cabinet should set the sectoral targets. This process was to be coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment, and, if implemented, would have given environmental policy a stronger cross-sectoral, horizontal dimension.

The Norwegian Government issues a long-term programme every four years. Whether or not this qualifies as a strategic document for sustainable development is questionable. Sustainable development and environmental concerns do figure, but are by no means fully integrated into the sectoral policy discussions in the long-term programme, and, in fact, references to sustainable development had been significantly reduced in the last plan, compared to previous plans. Much like the SEAPs, the long-term programmes suffer from a lack of specific targets (with the possible exception of renewable non-HEP energy in the most recent programme), which make them poorly suited as strategic policy documents for sustainable development.

Horizontal policy integration is, therefore, one of the weakest features of environmental policy integration in Norway, and nothing has emerged thus far from the belated work on a national strategy for sustainable development to alter this impression.
Conclusion

Norway made an early start with policies for environmental policy integration. Already in the follow-up of *Our Common Future*, the Government outlined a number of initiatives that, if implemented, would have comprised a comprehensive system of EPI. However, the implementation of EPI initiatives has been slow and piecemeal. Only with the implementation of the initiatives outlined in White Paper 58 did Norway’s policy for EPI begin to take shape. Ironically, White Paper 58 effectively re-launched a number of the initiatives of White Paper 46 – from ten years earlier. Most importantly, the implementation of the initiatives of White Paper 58 involved SEAPs and an RDS. Both initiatives have great potential, and the fact that they are in the process of being implemented suggests that Norway may have regained some of the initiative from the late 1980s that appeared to have been lost in the early and mid-1990s. However, implementation is far from satisfactory, and the coming years will show whether, for example, the full operation of the RDS will improve the SEAPs enough to achieve significant cross-sectoral policy integration.

In the introduction to this chapter, we discussed EPI along two different axes: a vertical and a horizontal dimension (Figure 1 above). In short: “Vertical environmental policy integration indicates the extent to which a particular governmental sector has taken on board and implemented environmental objectives as central in the portfolio of objectives that the sector continuously pursues” (Lafferty 2001: 11). The horizontal dimension denotes cross-sectoral initiatives that concern policy coordination and the development of a more comprehensive cross-sectoral strategy for sustainable development (ibid.: 12). In the case of Norway, it is clear that the vertical dimension has been the strongest: SEAPs and EIAs, despite their deficiencies, contribute significantly to this dimension. As we have seen, the lack of a national sustainable development strategy, the dissolution of two high-level cross-sectoral policy committees, and the lack of a an effective system for monitoring results and furthering change (RDS) mean that the horizontal dimension is relatively weak in Norwegian integration policy (Torjussen 2002: 68-71, 90-91). This means that the ambition of Agenda 21: “to harmonise the various sectoral economic, social and environmental policies and plans” (UN 1993: 66) has been broadly neglected. Taking into consideration that effective vertical integration is clearly dependent on strong horizontal integration, there is little doubt that the central weakness in Norway, vis à vis both Agenda 21 and more recent OECD admonitions, is a lack of effective steering mechanisms for horizontal policy integration.

Notes

1 A similar point is made by Nollkaemper (2002: 25), who argues that an understanding of EPI as nothing more than effective environmental policy implies that the concept has no distinct meaning.
2 This is not, of course, to argue that environmental policy targets always take precedence. They should simply be considered among the most important, and, beyond this, be subject to appropriate democratic decision-making procedures (Lafferty 2001: 9-11).
3 The basic framework for the reporting procedure has remained the same throughout the 1990s. However, the term *Environmental Profile of the State Budget* is no longer used consistently. Furthermore, some ministries no longer report on environmental initiatives and allocations in their sectoral budget, but instead report to the bi-annual White Paper on *The Government’s Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment*. 
In fact, the Syse Government (1989-90) established a “Committee for Environmental Policy” (Det nasjonale miljøutvalget). The Brundtland Government that came to power in November 1990 changed the name to “the National Committee for Sustainable Development” (Det nasjonale utvalget for bærekraftig utvikling).

Permanent seats were held by the Prime Minister and Ministers of the Environment, Petroleum and Energy, Transport and Communication and Trade and Industry. In addition, other ministers participated when relevant issues were on the agenda. The following NGOs were represented on a permanent basis: The Norwegian Friends of the Earth, the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (MoE 1992b).

All references in this section are based on the unpublished minutes of the committee meetings between 1990 and 1993.

MoE (2001c), Comment was made at a guest lecture by Berntsen at the Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, 31 May 2001.

The Committee’s name in Norwegian is Nasjonalkomiteen for internasjonale miljøspørsmål (NIM), and while “miljøspørsmål” can be literally translated as “environmental questions” - as the Ministry clearly has done - a more suitable term would be “environmental issues”.

Permanent seats are held by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry, the Research Council of Norway, the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment, the Norwegian Friends of the Earth, and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. In addition, different ministries participate when relevant issues are on the agenda (MoE 1993).

All references in this section are based on the unpublished minutes of the committee meetings between 1993 and 2001.

This can be concluded from the minutes of the committee meetings between 1993 and 2001.

White Paper 13, which followed immediately after the Rio Summit, took the form of a summary report from the Summit, and had less emphasis on Norwegian strategic planning for sustainable development. This was particularly the case with respect to EPI, so that White Paper 13 made no significant addition to EPI at this stage (MoE 1992a).

These are terms used by the Ministry of the Environment. To our understanding “Management-by-objectives” means that policy should be developed in accordance with specific objectives set in advance. “Cost-effectiveness across sectors” means that initiatives should focus on the sectors were the most cost-effective environmental policy may be implemented.

“Key figures” is the term used by the Ministry of the Environment, but the term better understood in English is “headline indicators”.

The national targets relating to “Conservation and the Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity”, “Outdoor Recreation”, and “International Cooperation on Environmental Issues and Environmental Protection in the Polar Areas” are quite vague and lack timetables. In target areas such as “Cultural Heritage”, “Eutrophication and Oil Pollution”, “Hazardous Substances”, “Waste and Recycling” and “Climate Change, Air Pollution and Noise”, we find more concrete targets, including timetables (Torjussen 2002: 71-72).

“Statskonsult is a directorate placed under the Ministry of Labour and Government Administration. With its independent role in the administration, Statskonsult shall take initiatives that support a desired development within the areas of performance management, restructuring and organizational development, information technology planning and coordination, internationalization, and management development” (Statskonsult 2002). In 2001, Statskonsult conducted an evaluation of the sectoral environmental actions plans made by the ministries.

Statskonsult (2001: 38) seems to interpret White Paper 58 as giving the environmental administration responsibility for breaking down general objectives to concrete targets for the sector ministries. White Paper 58 is not clear on this point, since the paper does not mention who is supposed to set the sectoral target. According to some documents written by the MoE, responsibility for setting sectoral targets will differ from sector to sector. “Targets for Reduced Environmental Impact” are to be suggested by the MoE, and “Targets for Implementing Initiatives” and “Process Targets” are to be developed by the sector ministries (MoE 2001b: 18-19).
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up a special website to provide information about the strategy process and to enable people to submit viewpoints and proposals. All in all, 12 people contributed. The cost of the website has been estimated at approx. USD 50 000.

In the 2002-05 programme (MoF 2001), there are few references to “sustainable development” (although there is a reference to “sustainable environmental management”). In the previous long-term programmes (MoF 1989; 1993; 1997), there was more frequent and substantive reference to “sustainable development”.

HEP stands for Hydro Electric Power.

References


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