



Integration of research results into policy making: Recommendations to policy-makers

The Brief in brief

EU-funded research projects are increasingly asked to include policy and societal dimensions into their work plans and strengthen their dissemination and science-policy interface (SPI) activities. A key challenge on the policy side is to stimulate the development of science-policy interaction processes and institutions that respond to policy needs in an effective manner. This brief outlines some recommendations to address this challenge.

Recommendations to policy-makers¹

- **Reinforce the strategic dialogue.** A long term consultative strategic dialogue between science and policy can contribute to ensuring that policy has access to, and uses, best available knowledge. It can also bring about a better focus of research questions to meet policy needs. This entails reinforcing the capacity to formulate policy needs and questions as well as forward looking approaches and horizon scanning as part of the process.
- **Recognise that good interfaces are resource intensive.** Too often the research contribution to policy initiatives (e.g. involvement in assessments, participation in advisory committees and expert groups, drafting of policy briefs, information papers to support international negotiations) is under-resourced. These activities are time consuming and need to be appropriately funded, both by research funders and by policy institutions.
- **Increase SPI skills.** Find creative ways to improve the skills of staff in policy and research communities operating at the science-policy interface. This could include specific training, dedicated summer schools open to both scientists and policy-makers, and secondments of policy-makers and scientists.
- **Strengthen the role and effectiveness of chief scientists and their units.** By working more closely together and in collaboration with scientific networks, chief scientist units in different Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Commission could strongly support the integration of knowledge across DGs, hence also supporting environmental integration and policy coherence.
- **Consider establishing science-policy platforms or fora.** Collecting information needs from policy, facilitating the strategic dialogue, and synthesizing research via science-policy platforms could be an effective and efficient way to fill some of the key gaps at the science-policy interfaces.
- **Remember that there is no one-size-fits-all science-policy interface.** A combination of processes will be needed, spanning policy levels, policy areas and governance systems. Be creative, learn by doing, and leave space for evolution and adaptation of processes.
- **Identify areas of research needing long-term support.** As part of the strategic dialogue, policy-makers, the scientific community and civil society should jointly identify research areas and types of research, which need to be maintained in a long-term perspective. This should be implemented in particular in successive calls of Horizon 2020 in order to maintain the research flow, the long-term datasets needed for environmental research, the policy links and the development of the European Research Area.

Looking for more information on science-policy interfaces?

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¹ The following recommendations were developed at a workshop on “Better interfacing EU research projects and EU policy-making”, organised by SPIRAL jointly with the European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), with the participation of the European Environment Agency (EEA).

This brief is a result of research and interactions within and around the SPIRAL project. This brief was written by Johannes Timaeus, Carsten Neßhöver & Heidi Wittmer (UFZ); Juliette Young & Allan Watt (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology); and Sybille van den Hove (Median).

The **SPIRAL** project studies Science-Policy Interfaces between biodiversity research and policy to improve the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. SPIRAL is an interdisciplinary research project funded under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013), contract number: 244035.

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