Handbook on Policy Coherence

An easy guide to assess and understand policy coherence

Funded by the European Union

CrossGov

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Web version of the Handbook: https://www.policycoherencehandbook.eu/

Interested in carrying out policy coherence assessments together?
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Glossary

Assessment In policy analysis, the term 'Assessment' is often used both anticipatorily (to guide future policy decisions) and retrospectively, while the term 'Evaluation' is typically used retrospectively after a policy has been implemented. In this handbook, we primarily use the term 'assess' for both anticipatory and retrospective analyses of policy coherence.

Coherence Policy coherence refers to how well different policies work together. Coherence can be defined as the extent to which policies strengthen each other by promoting synergies or reducing conflicts between objectives and measures both in design and during implementation.

Effectiveness Policy effectiveness refers to the achievement of the expected policy objectives by the policy's own measures. This involves comparing the effects and impacts of the measures with its intended objectives. Policy coherence may facilitate policy effectiveness and the other way around, and are thus closely interrelated concepts.

Measures The specific actions taken to achieve the objectives of a concrete policy or a plan.

Objectives The outcomes the policy sets out to achieve, as specified in the articles of the policy document. Policy objectives may be referred to in policy documents as goals, objectives, targets, commitments, or in other ways. They can be overarching, general, not quantified goals and/or specific quantified targets.

- **General objectives** The overall goals of a policy, expressed in terms of 'policy outcome' or 'policy impact'. These objectives are often broad goals that are not quantifiable and do not have a specific timeline.
- **Specific objectives** The targets to be achieved to meet the general objectives**.** Specific objectives are expressed in terms of the direct and short-term results of a policy. Specific objectives tend to be measurable targets with a deadline or a specified time limit and may have associated result indicators.

Policy area A policy area refers to a substantive group of policies that has formed around societal or sectoral interests. Examples of policy areas are environmental protection, trade, transport, waste, or renewable energy.

Policy The term policy is understood in a broad sense, referring to a set of objectives, rules and measures that provide guidance for solving a particular societal issue. In this handbook, a policy can encompass substantive documents such as white papers and strategies as well as specific laws and regulations, or directives. Many of the examples provided throughout the handbook are EU-level policies, such as regulations and directives.

Purpose of the handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an easy guide to researchers, policy makers and consultants on how to carry out policy coherence assessments. The handbook explains a four-phased approach to coherence assessments that takes the user from the selection of policies to the synthesis of results. The handbook provides light and in-depth alternatives for assessing the level of coherence within and between policies, adaptable to the users' needs.

The handbook also offers guidance to facilitate understanding of the underlying factors that affect coherence, with examples and guiding questions to inform coherence assessments. Assessing these underlying factors enables a deeper understanding of the reasons behind low or high levels of coherence. Understanding these reasons can also help users to identify solutions to incoherence and thereby increase levels of policy coherence.

This handbook has been developed in the context of the Horizon Europe funded CrossGov project (Coherent and cross-compliant ocean governance for delivering the Green Deal for European seas). The handbook is the result of joint learning within the CrossGov consortium and has benefitted from knowledge and insights from many researchers. For a full list of CrossGov sources and references used for the development of this handbook, see References.

While the methodological guidance is generic and applicable to many different policy areas, the examples used throughout the handbook mainly describe coherence in coastal and marine related policies. CrossGov focused on coherence between different environmental policies as well as coherence of economic sector policies with environmental policies.

1. What is Policy Coherence and why is it important?

Introduction

Over several decades, complex multi-level and multi-sector policy landscapes have unfolded. This has resulted in a situation where current policy frameworks at the EU and (sub)national levels are fragmented. Policies addressing specific sectors, activities or problems also often directly or indirectly affect other sectors and problems. Multiple policies apply simultaneously to specific (sector) activities or (parts of) problems. Since the policies are often developed by different authorities, within different contexts, and for different purposes, the policies can contain overlaps, gaps, weaknesses, and inconsistencies.

Policy coherence refers to how well different policies work together. Coherence can be defined as the extent to which policies strengthen each other by promoting synergies or reducing conflicts between objectives and measures both in design and during implementation. In policy landscapes with low coherence, the achievement of multiple objectives may be difficult, and trade-offs often need to be made.

Provided that there is a high level of coherence, policies can also positively reinforce one another by creating synergies that facilitate achieving multiple objectives. At a minimum though, a policy should not hinder progress towards achieving other policies' objectives and targets.

Horizontal and vertical coherence

Policy coherence can be assessed within the same governance level (horizontal coherence) or across different governance levels (vertical coherence) (Figure 1).

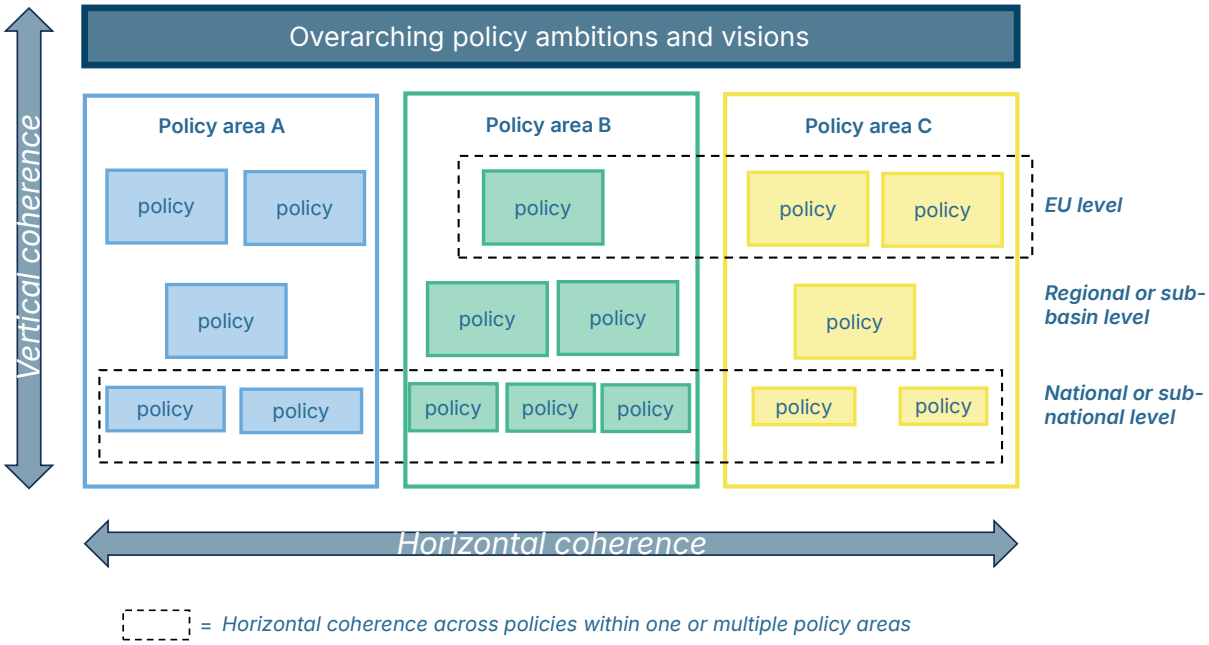


Figure 1 Illustration of vertical and horizontal coherence

Horizontal coherence refers to how well policies at the same governance level work together, for example between different EU policies. Horizontal coherence can be assessed between policies within the same policy area, for instance between different EU water and wastewater policies. Horizontal coherence can also be assessed between policies from different policy areas, such as water and agricultural policies, or renewable energy and biodiversity policies.

When policies addressing specific sectors, activities or problems also often directly or indirectly affect other sectors and problems, an assessment of horizontal coherence can help identifying excessive burdens, overlaps, gaps, inconsistencies, implementation problems, and/or obsolete measures. Understanding horizontal coherence can also help identify potential synergies across policies and policy areas that could be strengthened to improve overall policy performance.

Vertical coherence refers to how well policies are aligned between different governance levels, for example EU and national level policies. Vertical coherence is key to ensure successful multi-level policy implementation.

Assessing vertical coherence may involve assessing whether national policies are coherent with specific EU Directives. All EU directives need to be transposed into national legislation. This means that EU Member States must incorporate the EU rules into national law. Even though Member States have some flexibility in the way they transpose the EU laws, they should ensure coherence with the original directives. After transposition, the EU policies become effective at the national level. However, it may mandate activities at sub-national level, creating a vertical coherence challenge, for example between municipal and national policies.

Assessing vertical coherence may also involve assessing whether national policies are in line with the broader policy ambitions and objectives, such as those in the European Green Deal, or the more recent EU Oceans Pact, or international policies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 1).

Examples:

- *An example of horizontal coherence within the same policy area would be assessing the EU Water Framework Directive towards the EU Habitats Directive. Such an assessment would show how aligned the Water Framework Directive and the Habitats Directive are in their objectives and measures to protect biodiversity and achieve good ecological status of water bodies.*
- *An example of horizontal coherence across different policy areas would be to assess EU Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive with EU policies on food or energy production, like to the Common Agriculture Policy and Common Fisheries Policy, or the Renewable Energy Directive.*
- *An example of vertical coherence would be assessing national legislation against the EU Water Framework Directive to see if the country is implementing river basin management plans in line with EU requirements.*

The role of policy coherence in the achievement of multiple objectives

Both horizontal and vertical coherence are important factors contributing to the joint achievement of different policy objectives. Low coherence limits the effectiveness of policies when transposed to lower levels of governance. It also increases the probability of making trade-offs that negatively affect achieving multiple policy objectives. On the other hand, where coherence is high, policies can positively reinforce one another by making use of synergies that facilitate achieving multiple different policy objectives. At a minimum, coherence should ensure that one policy does not hinder progress towards reaching other policies' objectives and targets.

Example of trade-offs and potential synergies:

- *The Renewable Energy Directive III has set the target to expand the EU's offshore wind energy capacity to 60 GW by 2030. This will require the expansion of offshore wind energy installations, with potential consequences for biodiversity and ecosystems. At the same time, the Nature Restoration Regulation sets out objectives to protect 20% of European seas and restore degraded marine ecosystems. Due to the possibility for exemptions from biodiversity-related policies in order to accelerate offshore wind energy development, there is a risk that offshore wind energy is driven forward at the expense of biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration.*
- *Offshore wind energy installations can create new habitats for marine species like crustaceans and fish. Including requirements to apply nature positive designs in offshore wind energy installations could therefore contribute positively to biodiversity objectives while delivering on renewable energy targets and climate change mitigation action.*

Policy coherence key across the policy cycle

Policy coherence plays a role at several stages of the policy cycle (Figure 2). At the policy formulation stage, policy coherence is one of the five criteria to be assessed in an impact assessment. Impact assessments aim at anticipating the potential outcomes of different policy alternatives. In the EU, this process is guided by the Better Regulation guidelines and tools (see Chapter 5).

At the policy evaluation stage, policies are retrospectively evaluated to determine how well the policy has performed towards its intended outcomes. Coherence is included in this evaluation. This final evaluation will inform the policy review process. Policy evaluation at the EU level also follows the Better Regulation guidelines, with evaluations and fitness checks as supporting tools. The guidance in this handbook is relevant for the assessment and understanding of coherence both before policies are adopted and during the process of implementation and evaluation.

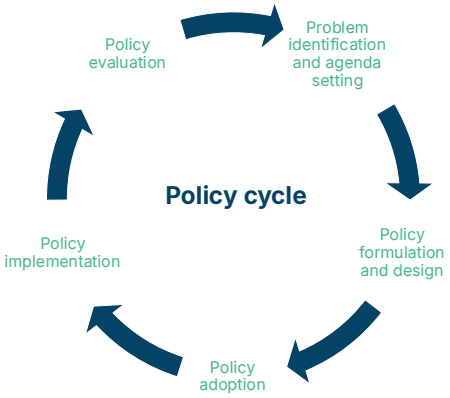


Figure 2 Phases of the policy cycle

Conclusion

To sum up, policy coherence is important. Policy coherence needs to be ensured and strengthened particularly during policy formulation and design processes as well as under policy implementation. High levels of policy coherence can have a positive effect on the achievement of policy objectives, and will lead to desirable policy outputs, outcomes and impacts. However, several factors can affect levels of policy coherence at the policy formulation and design phase and the policy implementation phase (Figure 3). These factors are explained in Chapter 4.

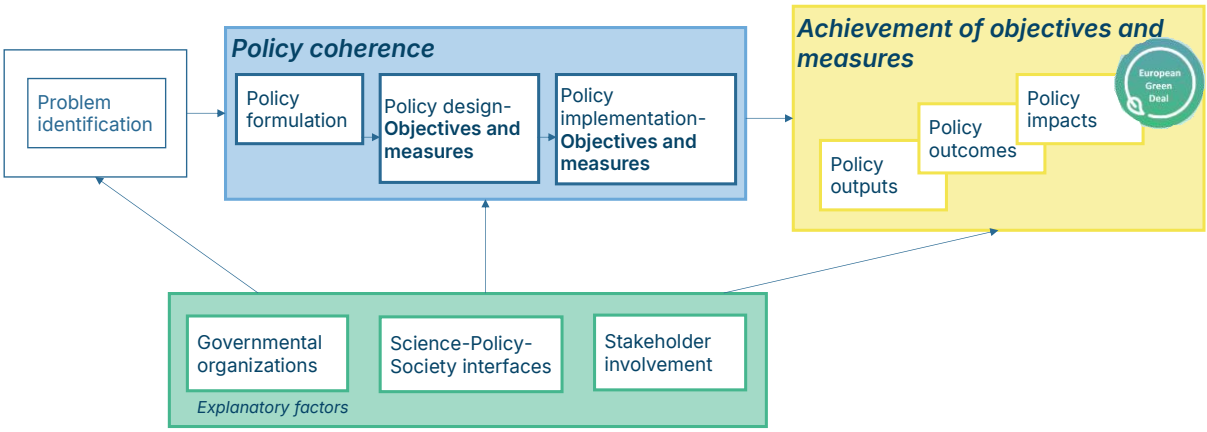


Figure 3 The role of policy coherence for the achievement of policy impacts

Further reading

For an overview of the references and sources used for the development of this handbook, see References and sources.

For a brief introduction to other concepts related to policy coherence, see Understanding policy coherence in relation to other relevant concepts.

2. How to structure a policy coherence assessment?

Introduction

A policy coherence assessment can be structured into four phases: 1) structuring the assessment, 2) data collection, 3) data analysis and 4) synthesis and conclusions. The table below provides a quick overview of the four phases, which are described in more detail in the guidance section. This approach follows the European Environment Agency's guidance for policy evaluations and is in line with the European Commission's Better Regulation guidelines.

Phase of the assessment	Steps to be undertaken
1. Structuring the assessment	Preparing an initial overview of policies to be assessed (step 1.1)
	Setting the time frame (step 1.2)
	Determining the geographical scope (step 1.3)
	Defining the evaluation questions (step 1.4)
2. Data collection	Data needs
	Data collection methods
3. Data analysis	Policy coherence analysis
4. Synthesis and conclusions	Answer evaluation question(s)

Guidance

Phase 1: Structuring the assessment

The structuring phase defines the boundaries of the assessment in terms of policies, time frame and geographical scope, and determines the evaluation questions to be addressed.

In this phase, you need to select the policies that will be part of the assessment. Include all relevant policies from the governance level(s) that are part of the assessment. Depending on whether you are looking at horizontal or vertical coherence, this may be one or more governance levels. Which policies are relevant will depend on what you are interested in finding out. What is important is that there is some level of interaction between the policies you select. These could be policies within one policy area (for example fisheries), or policies from different policy areas between which there are impacts and dependencies (for example agriculture and water management).

You also need to set the time frame for the assessment. Determining the time frame of the assessment is important to clarify which versions of policies are being assessed and which policies are included or excluded. This is particularly relevant for policies that are under revision or when new proposals are announced. When exploring implementation of policies, it is also important to specify the time period within which progress in policy implementation is assessed.

The geographical scope of the assessment should also be set before the assessment can begin. This is particularly important when assessing framework policies like EU policies that are implemented in specific national and sub-national contexts.

Finally, a key output of the structuring phase are the evaluation questions that will be addressed by the assessment. It is important to be specific about what you want to find out in order to guide the assessment. Defining sub-questions can help with this.

Examples of evaluation questions for marine polices in the EU:

To what extent are EU policies coherent with the selected European Green Deal goals and targets?
To what extent are EU policies coherent with each other?
How do specific horizontal coherence challenges across EU level policies affect a single policy's support towards the Green Deal goals and targets?
To what extent are national-level policies coherent with EU policies and/or Green Deal targets?

Examples of sub-questions:
Are the policy objectives aligned substantively, geographically, and temporally?
How do the measures of policy A support the objectives and measures of policy B, and vice versa?

Phase 2: Data collection

In the second phase, the data for the assessment is collected. The type of data needed, and appropriate data collection methods will depend on the evaluation question(s) and on whether you intend to conduct a light or in-depth assessment. (The two assessment types are explained in Chapter 3). Typically, light assessments can be conducted based on expert or stakeholder opinion. This can provide a first mapping before an in-depth assessment or be the only assessment. For the in-depth coherence assessments, desk-based studies that involve the analysis of policy documents, legal acts, secondary literature is recommended, in combination with expert interviews.

The first step in Phase 2 is to determine what kind of data and information are needed to answer the evaluation question(s). Basic data needed for a coherence assessment are the objectives, targets and measures of the assessed policies. Policy objectives are defined as the results and outcomes the policy sets out to achieve, as specified in the articles or text of the policy document. Measures are the specific actions that need to be taken to deliver the policy objectives. It is important to understand their alignment on paper as well as how these objectives and measures interact during actual decision-

making, policymaking, and planning processes. For a more comprehensive description of policy objectives and measures, and examples, see Chapter 3.

The second step consists of determining the relevant data sources and methods to collect this data. The following box provides an overview of possible data sources and collection methods for the assessment of coherence.

Sources and methods for collecting data:

1. Text analysis of legislative and policy documents

Data is collected from the actual policy document text, as well as related documents and case law. Related documents can include evaluation reports and impact assessments, guidelines, explanatory memorandums and other documents that aim to explain the intention or anticipated effects of the policy.

2. Analysis of academic and policy reports

Data is collected from policy reports and research studies. This includes impact assessments, fitness checks, strategic environmental assessments, mid-term and ex-post evaluations studies. It also includes academic literature on scholarly analyses of specific policies.

3. Surveys (interviews and questionnaires)

Data is collected through interviews or questionnaires. Survey participants can be experts, officials, stakeholders or anyone who has relevant knowledge of, or a concrete interest in, the subject under investigation.

4. Stakeholder workshops

Data is collected from a group of stakeholders or experts through workshops, expert panels or focus groups.

5. Case studies

Data is collected from case studies. Case studies can be an important approach to better understand the causal pathways between policy design, implementation and impacts. It is possible to study single cases, though more insight can be gained by comparing findings across different case studies.

Phase 3: Data analysis

Phase C is the main assessment phase. In this phase, the collected data will be analyzed to address the evaluation questions defined in Phase 1. The CrossGov Policy Coherence Framework can be used for the data analysis phase. (See further Chapter 3).

Note: *The guidance from this framework can be used when conducting policy assessments and evaluations according to EU's Better Regulation guidelines. See especially chapter 5 of this handbook for a description.*

Phase 4: Synthesis and conclusions

In the last phase, the results of the analysis (Phase 3) are pulled together to provide answers to the evaluation questions defined in Phase 1.

In this phase, it is possible to use aggregated scoring approaches to illustrate the findings in presentations, policy briefs, or publications. Examples of scoring approaches are colour-coded scales from not coherent to coherent. However, applying consistent and robust scoring in a policy coherence assessment is challenging as the assessment might be comparing very different policies. Moreover, scoring can only reflect the level of coherence. In order to provide valuable insight into specific challenges and obstacles towards policy coherence, the detailed assessment findings should be presented as part of the synthesis.

3. Assessing the level of policy coherence

Introduction

Once you have collected all the relevant information and data for the targeted policies, you need to start analyzing the information. The CrossGov Policy Coherence Framework is a methodological framework for assessing and understanding policy coherence.

The framework consists of two parts (Figure 4):
Part A: Assessing the level of policy coherence (explained in this chapter).
Part B: Explanatory factors (understanding what factors cause policy (in)coherence) (explained in Chapter 4).

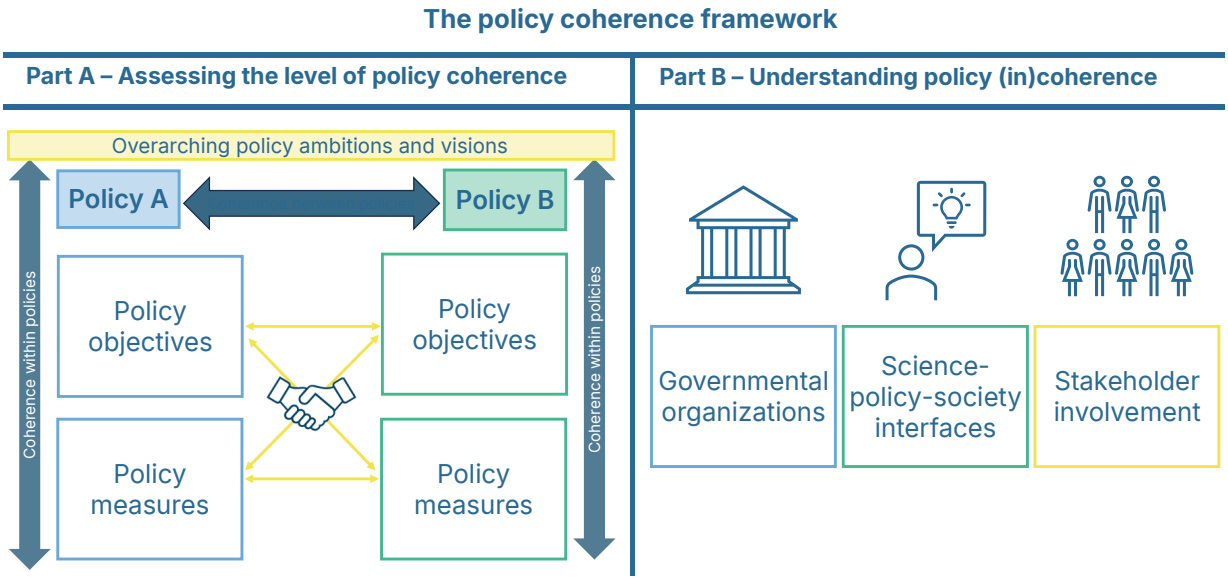


Figure 4 The CrossGov Policy Coherence Framework

This chapter introduces part A of the framework and provides guidance and recommendations on how to use it. Examples are given to illustrate the different steps of the assessment.

Note: *Both parts of the framework can be used independently from each other. Our recommendation, however, is to first assess policy coherence (Part A) and then look at reasons that explain why you have coherence or incoherence (Part B).*

What are we assessing?

When assessing the level of coherence between policies, we are considering coherence between the objectives and the measures of the policies (Figure 5).

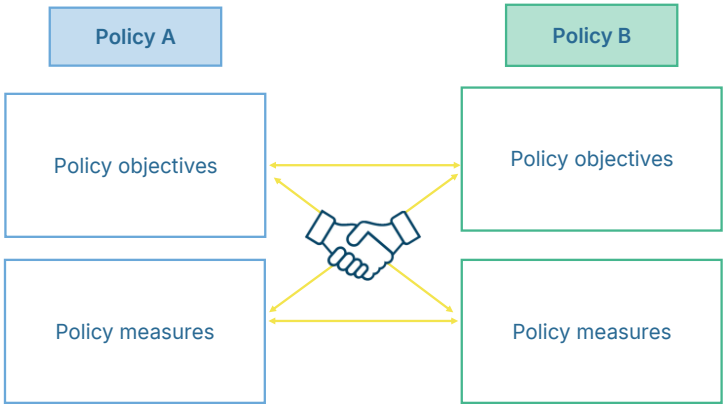


Figure 5 Coherence between policy objectives and measures

Policy objectives are defined as the results and outcomes the policy sets out to achieve, as specified in the articles or text of the policy document. Policy objectives may be referred to in policy documents as goals, objectives, targets, commitments, or in other ways. They can be overarching, general, not quantified goals and/or specific quantified targets.

It is important to include both general and specific objectives in the assessments. General objectives are the overall goals of a policy, expressed in terms of 'policy outcome' or 'policy impact'. These objectives are often broad, not quantifiable and without a specific timeline.

Specific objectives are targets to be achieved to meet the general objectives. Specific objectives are expressed in terms of the direct and short-term results of a policy. Specific objectives tend to be measurable, have a deadline or a specified time limit and may have associated indicators to measure results.

Examples of general objectives:

- *All the world's ecosystems are restored, resilient and protected – Biodiversity Strategy.*
- *Ensure long-term sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, the availability of food supplies and a fair standard of living for fisheries and aquaculture communities – Common Fisheries Policy.*
- *Achieve good environmental status in the marine environment as well as sustainable use and coherence with other EU law – Marine Strategy Framework Directive.*
- *Conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora in the EU both on land and sea habitats – Habitats Directive.*
- *Reduce and prevent water pollution from nitrates – Nitrates Directive.*
- *To improve maritime safety and enhance protection of the marine environment from pollution by ships – Ship Source Pollution Directive.*

Examples of specific objectives:

- *Reduce net GHG emissions by at least 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030 – Climate Law.*
- *By 2030, restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas, with all ecosystems in need of restoration targeted by 2050 – Nature Restoration Regulation.*
- *Expand offshore wind capacity from 12 GW to at least 60 GW by 2030 - Offshore energy strategy.*
- *Achieve at least 32% of the EU's energy consumption from renewable sources by 2030 - Renewable Energy Directive III.*
- *Reduce by 50% plastic litter at sea and by 30% microplastics released into the environment – Zero Pollution Action Plan.*

Note: *The distinction between general and specific objectives is not always clear. For example, general objectives can include deadlines, and specific objectives might not always be quantifiable and easily measurable.*

In addition to objectives, we also need to consider the measures of the policies. Measures are the specific actions that are put in place by the policy to deliver its objectives.

There are many types of measures. Laws and regulations can grant access to resources through licensing systems or directly prohibit certain actions. Economic measures are intended to incentivize desired behaviors, for example through subsidies, taxes or market-based approaches such as tradable quotas. Other types of measures are information and education campaigns, creation of new types of organizations and requirements to elaborate plans or strategies with a prescribed content.

Besides the intended outcomes, the measures may have unforeseen impacts and may affect other policies and objectives than the ones they are meant to support. This impact on other policies and objectives may be positive or negative, foreseen or unintended. Considering the interplay between the measures and objectives is key for assessing coherence.

Many policies contain multiple measures. Sometimes a combination of measures is used to jointly ensure the achievement of one specific policy objective. For instance, an agricultural policy aiming to reduce run-off from fields may use a combination of regulations on the breadth of green strips along rivers, information campaigns for farmers and subsidies to compensate them for production losses.

In cases where the policy contains many objectives, the policy might include a number of measures to support different objectives. If some objectives have weak support by effective measures while others are supported by many powerful ones, the policy would be unbalanced. This may not be apparent if you only assess the objectives.

Internal and external coherence assessments

Coherence assessments mainly concern the interrelationships between policies. However, it is useful to start the assessment with a close consideration of the individual policies that are to be compared. Understanding internal coherence of the individual policies facilitates understanding external coherence between the policies. This chapter therefore provides guidance for both internal and external coherence assessments (

Figure 6).

Internal coherence assessment: This step examines individual policies, their internal coherence and relation to overarching objectives (such as from the European Green Deal).

External coherence assessment: This step examines the interactions within a group of policies, assessing whether they are in conflict or create synergies, and identifying where trade-offs may arise.

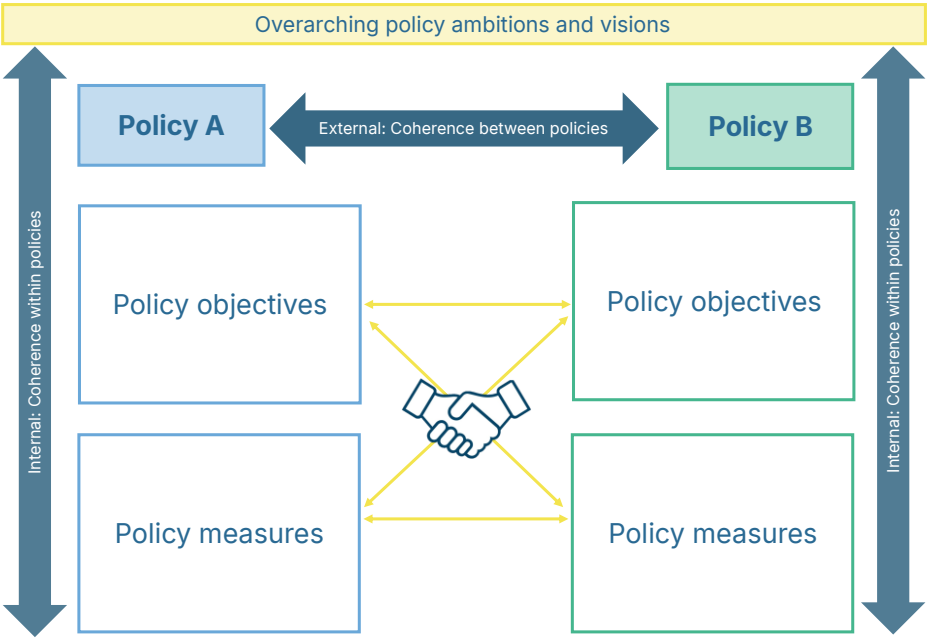


Figure 6 External and internal coherence assessments

Recommendation: *Depending on the focus of analysis, the assessment of internal and external coherence can be conducted independently from each other. We recommend, however, starting with an internal coherence assessment of individual policies before understanding how policies interact with each other.*

Light and in-depth coherence assessments

For both internal and external coherence assessments, we provide two options:

- ✓ Light coherence assessment: This can be conducted based on expert or stakeholder opinion and can provide a first mapping of policy coherence. It can also be done based on an analysis of policy documents, by only focusing on overarching questions.
- ✓ In-depth coherence assessment: This type of assessment asks more detailed questions to guide the assessment. The recommended methodology includes a desk-based study (analyzing policy documents, legal acts, case law, and secondary literature) combined with expert interviews. The detailed guiding questions help answer the overarching questions from the light coherence assessment in more depth.

Recommendation: *The choice between the light and in-depth assessment depends on the context and ambition of the assessment. We recommend beginning with a light coherence assessment and conducting an in-depth assessment when internal coherence issues or policy trade-offs are identified. Choose the light option to get a first mapping of 1) the coherence of objectives and measures within individual policies, and 2) the coherence of individual policies with higher-level policies.*

3.a Internal coherence - Assessing coherence within policies

Assessing internal coherence means assessing whether there are any conflicting objectives within one policy and exploring how the objectives are supported by the various measures of that policy. It may also include considering how the policy is aligned with overarching objectives, targets or goals set in higher-level policies, such as the European Green Deal, Oceans Pact, or the Sustainable Development Goals.

This chapter provides guidance for the assessment of the objectives and measures of individual policies.

> ***Note:*** *The framework was designed for assessing and understanding the interconnections of marine-related policies in the context of the EU Green Deal. However, the general approach and most of the guiding questions can also be applied to other policy contexts and we encourage users to expand and adapt the scope and guiding questions accordingly.*

Coherence of objectives

Policies often have multiple objectives, targets and goals. It is important to understand the interrelationships between these different objectives, and how they support overarching ambitions (Figure 7).

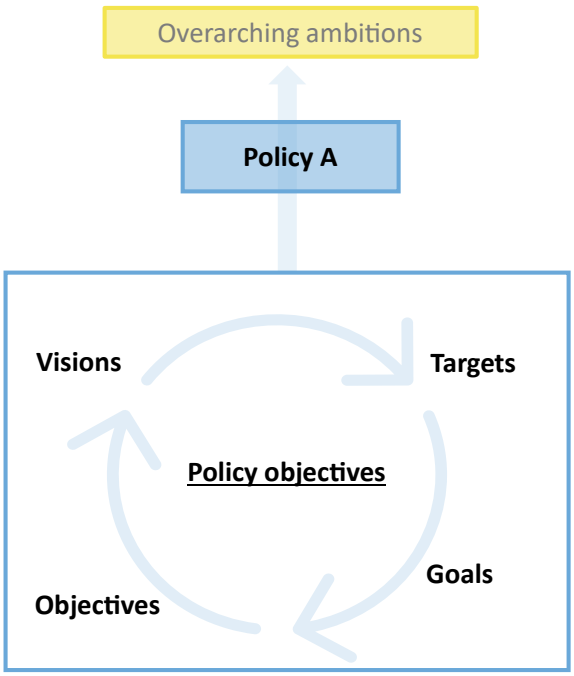


Figure 7 Internal coherence assessment of objectives

To begin the assessment, we recommend exploring the following questions:

1) What are the objectives of the policy?
    a. If there are multiple objectives, are they mutually supportive or conflicting with each other?

2) To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions?
    a. Are the overarching ambitions mainstreamed into the policy? Do the objectives of the policy support or conflict with the overarching ambitions?

Examples:

- *The Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy promotes both biodiversity related objectives and economic objectives, which may potentially conflict with each other.*
- *The Dutch Programme North Sea (2022-2027) incorporates both the national Marine Spatial Planning efforts of designating areas for offshore wind energy generation and other economic activities, as well as the programme of measures for achieving a Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Although the overarching objective is to promote the sustainable use of the sea towards maintaining a healthy Dutch North Sea, there are possibilities for conflict between the economic and environmental objectives within the same policy instrument.*
- *The European Green Deal 'Farm to Fork' Strategy aims to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides by 50% by 2030 while the Common Agricultural Policy supports agricultural productivity, which under conventional practices often relies on the use of fertilizers and pesticides. The Common Agricultural Policy might therefore not directly support the ambitions of the 'Farm to Fork' Strategy.*

Do you want to go more in depth? Consider exploring the following questions:

1) If the policy has multiple objectives, are these sufficiently aligned?
    a. Are the policy objectives aligned substantively, i.e. in terms of subject matter?
    b. Are the policy objectives aligned geographically, i.e. in terms of spatial application?
    c. Are the policy objectives aligned 'temporally', i.e. in terms of timeframes for their achievement?

Examples:

- *The objectives of the Industrial Emission Directive are closely aligned with those of the European Green Deal, particularly in the areas of pollution prevention and control, creating notable synergies between the directive and the Green Deal.*
- *The EU Climate Law and the Green Deal share the same aim to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.*
- *The Nature Restoration Regulation was created with the overarching Green Deal in mind, which means that the deadlines for different obligations have been aligned with the objectives of the Green Deal.*

2) Do all the objectives within the policy have the same legal status and power to put into effect action?
    a. Are there differences in how legally binding different objectives are? Are there differences in the enforcement opportunities they encompass?
    b. Do the various objectives entail the same requirements for authorities to take action? Compare, for example, whether the authorities are expected to accomplish the objectives (=obligation of results), or are only obliged to make sufficient efforts to work towards them (=obligations of best effort)?

Example: *The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) contains both binding requirements and softer, voluntary objectives meaning that not all CAP objectives hold the same regulatory weight, potentially affecting coherent implementation.*

3) Does the policy allow for exemptions from certain objectives? How does the use of these exemptions affect the level of coherence within the policy?

Examples:

- *An environmental policy that aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030 but exempts agriculture and aviation sectors. These exemptions create incoherence by undermining the policy's primary goal, leading to contradictory objectives, uneven implementation, reduced effectiveness, and potential public distrust.*
- *The Common Fisheries Policy aims to ensure the sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources, amongst others through setting limits on the amount of fish that can be caught to prevent overfishing. As an exemption, certain levels of bycatch (unintended catch of non-target species) are allowed to be discarded without penalty. The exemptions for bycatch can lead to significant mortality of non-target species, undermining the sustainability objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.*
- *There are multiple objectives within the Nature Restoration Regulation, amongst which climate change mitigation and biodiversity restoration. The first objective is supported by multiple exemptions for renewable energy projects from biodiversity restoration requirements and by prioritizing these projects as of overriding public interest. The objective to restore biodiversity is not supported by similar legal exemptions and requirements, creating the risk of incoherent implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation.*

4) Are the policy objectives cross-referencing to overarching policy ambitions?

Examples*:*

- *The Nature Restoration Regulation cross-references several overarching objectives of the Green Deal, such as those related to climate adaptation and biodiversity restoration, ensuring alignment with broader EU environmental goals.*
- *In France, all the River Basin Management Plans now have an overarching objective of 'climate change mitigation' to ensure alignment with EU carbon neutrality objective.*

Coherence of measures towards achieving the objectives

Policies often have multiple measures to ensure the achievement of their objectives. It is important to understand the interrelationships between measures and objectives within the policy (Figure 8).

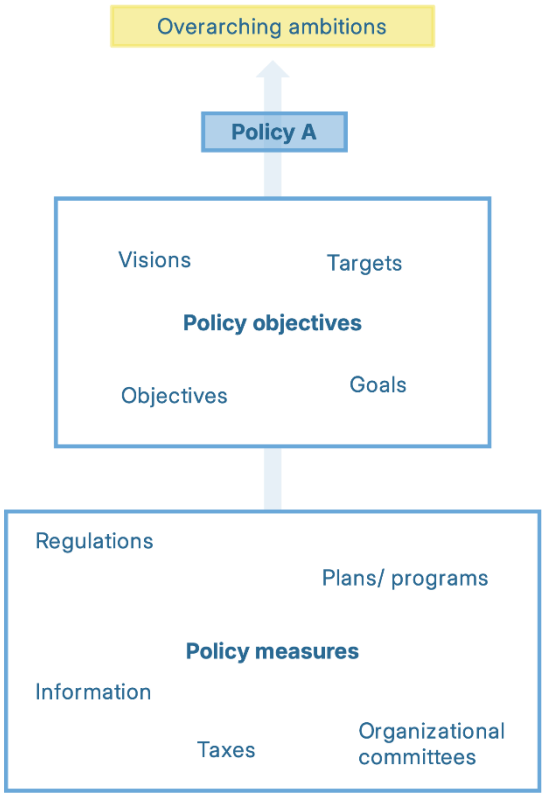


Figure 8 Internal coherence between policy measures and objectives

To begin the assessment of measures, we recommend the following questions:

1. What are the measures of the policy?
    a. If the policy has multiple objectives, it is important to explore which measures support which (subset of) objectives.
2. Do the measures also contribute to overarching ambitions, such as those of the Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Oceans Pact?

Do you want to go more in depth? Consider exploring the following:

A policy with multiple objectives may seem internally coherent when only the objectives are considered. An assessment of measures may however reveal that there are 'strong' measures to support some objectives, and 'weak' measures to support others.

To better understand the relationship between measures and objectives, a more in-dept assessment may be needed.

We recommend exploring the following questions:

1. Do all the measures collectively contribute to achieving all policy objectives or are some measures only relevant for achieving specific subsets of objectives?
    a. If the measures support different objectives, consider whether certain measures are more easily realizable than others, for instance due to available resources and budgets.
    b. How do the measures differ in terms of legal status and enforcement? Note that EU-level regulations are directly applicable in member states, while directives must be transposed into national legislation first.
    c. How does this variation affect the policy's direction? Do certain objectives become more significant because there are more measures supporting them than others?

Examples:

- *The Common Agricultural Policy has funds that provide financial aid with minimal requirements for environmental consideration, increasing the risk of pollution from agricultural practices. It also has funds for farmers who voluntarily commit to follow agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment, potentially decreasing agricultural pollution, and improving the environment.*
- *The Dutch Programme North Sea 2022-2027 contains multiple objectives, which are not all similarly supported by clear measures. To illustrate, the programme of measures necessary for the achievement of Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive is not coordinated with the process for the designation of offshore wind areas nor with the planning processes of other economic activities under the programme. So, it is not clear how these various measures are (if at all) taken into account in allocating space for different uses or in combining them, and how this affects the achievement of the programme objectives.*
- *The Maritime Spatial Plan for the Finnish Archipelago Sea aims to support achieving the good environmental status objective of the Marine Strategy in the Archipelago Sea. However, the Marine Strategy objective is not legally binding in the spatial planning process. As a result, maritime spatial plans might allocate areas to projects, like for example new aquaculture installations, that can have a negative impact on the marine environment in the Archipelago Sea.*
- *The EU Common Fisheries Policy aims at ensuring the long-term environmental sustainability of fishing and aquaculture activities. However, the Maximum Sustainable Yield objective has been postponed several times between 2020-2025. Measures are not always strong enough. For example, in France, at least until 2022, ⅘ of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund spendings have supported economic fishing activities and not the environmental transformation of the sector.*
- *The establishment of a climate fund under the Dutch North Sea Agreement aimed to balance the green energy transition at sea with the interests of other users that are directly affected by it. However, it seems that it will mostly be beneficial for fisheries, as fishers will be the ones receiving subsidies and compensation from this fund to cover for the fact that they may be excluded for fishing in particular areas.*

2. Does the policy include mechanisms to minimize negative trade-offs that can result from internally conflicting objectives or incoherences between measures?

Examples:

- *The Common Agriculture Policy includes objectives concerning environmental protection. However, other objectives within the same policy can result in degradation of the environment through increased production and promoting rural development. There are no clear links between the different objectives or measures. In the absence of mechanisms to minimize trade-offs, this has led to contradictory measures being enacted under the CAP.*
- *The possibility to financially compensate, if no other forms of compensation are feasible, for the negative impacts of renewable energy projects that are deemed necessary for the overriding public interest, is a mechanism to resolve trade-offs between biodiversity protection and offshore renewable wind development. This provision within the Renewable Energy Directive III applies to Renewables Acceleration Areas but has received criticism for its unclarity.*
- *The Marine Strategy Framework Directive provides a coordinating mechanism, bringing together the measures developed sectorally under other policies into one implementation document (i.e. Programme of Measures).*
- *In the context of the Common Fisheries Policy, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund is a mechanism that can be allocated to a wide range of measures, from developing the industry to changing to more fuel-efficient boats. As such, it can be used to minimize negative trade-offs. It can also have the opposite effect through, if the fund is applied to other measures that are deemed important for other reasons that enhancing coherence.*

The above guidance may help assess whether there are any conflicting objectives within one policy and explore how the objectives are supported by the various measures of that policy.

After the internal coherence assessment has been completed, it is recommended to continue with the external coherence assessment. This assessment examines the interactions within a group of policies, assessing whether they are in conflict or create synergies, and identifying where trade-offs may arise.

3.b External coherence - Assessing coherence between policies

Assessing external coherence means assessing whether there are any conflicting objectives and/or measures between policies. The assessment of external coherence involves at least two policies. The choice of which (and how many) policies to include in an assessment depends on the scope of the analysis. Due to the fragmentation of policies and policy areas, an assessment often involves many policies that are directly or indirectly relevant.

Recommendation: *For the selection of policies, some sort of overlap is needed for making an assessment of coherence relevant. Examples of such overlaps can be the targeted problem, geographical area, or stakeholders or actors affected, such as industries, farmers, fishers, or municipalities.*

Coherence of objectives

The policies involved in an external coherence assessment have multiple objectives, goals and targets. It is important to assess their level of coherence. In case of similar types of policies, such as two EU-level directives, this assessment might be straightforward (Figure 9).

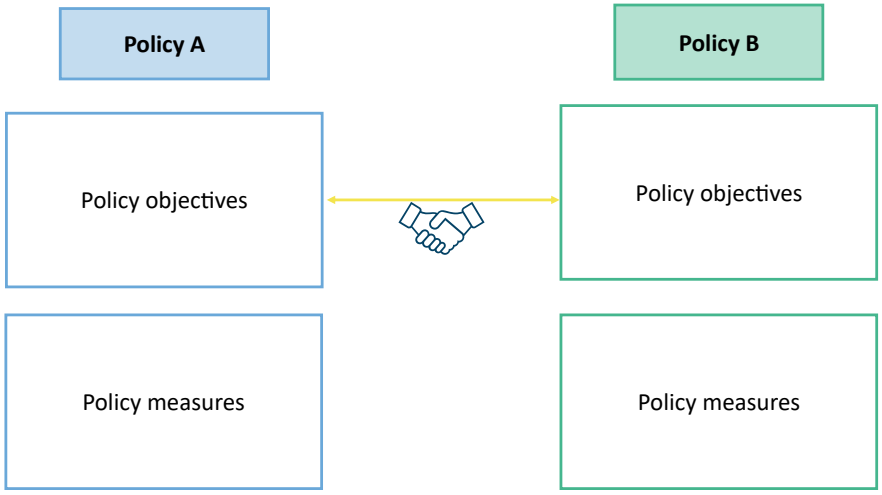


Figure 9 Simple external coherence assessment between two policies

However, reality is often more complex. The relevant policies are often of a different nature, encompassing directives, regulations, strategies, plans, and other types of policies. Some are directly relevant for the assessment, while others are more indirectly relevant, perhaps even belonging to separate policy areas (Figure 10). Some have clear and specific objectives, others more general policy visions. In such situations, it is often difficult to fully understand the overall coherence of the group of policies.

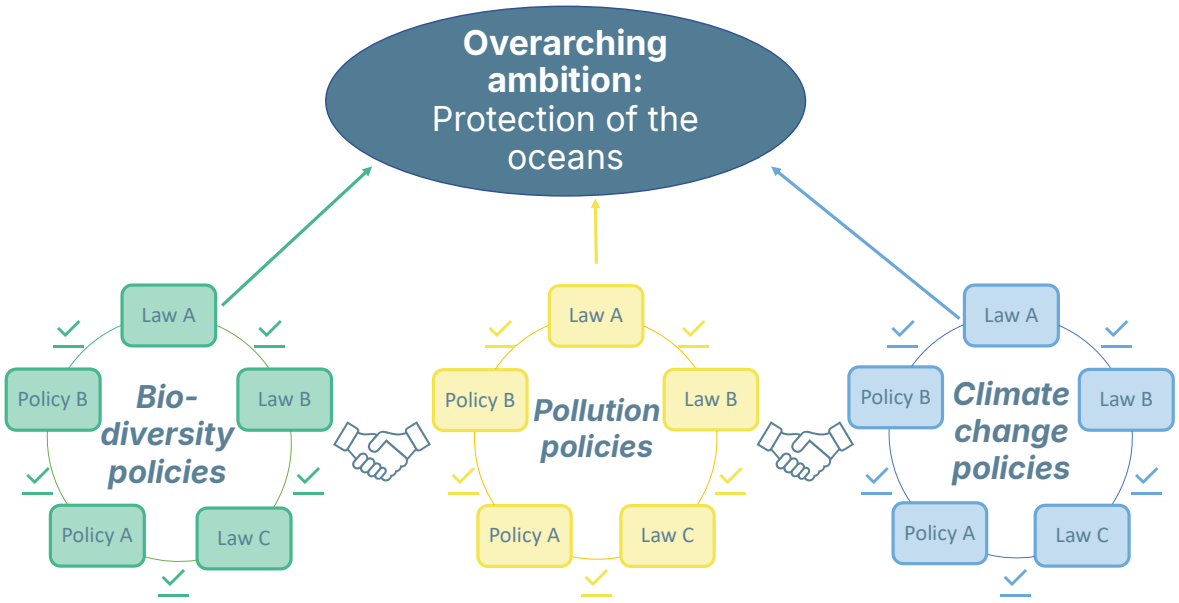


Figure 10 Complexity of external coherence assessments. Often, relevant policies come from the same as well as different policy areas.

To begin the assessment, we recommend exploring the following questions first:

1. What are the objectives of the policies?
    a. Are the objectives of the policies supporting each other?

2. To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions?
    b. Which policies are key in relation to the overarching ambitions?
    c. How are these policies affected by the objectives of other selected policies?

Recommendation: *Often a coherence assessment is carried out in light of some overarching ambition or research question. For example, to what extent do the selected policies together contribute to the EU's climate neutrality target, or the UN's poverty reduction vision? For understanding how a group of policies contributes an overarching ambition, we recommend a* ***two-step approach****. The first step is to assess how each individual policy contributes to the ambition (as explained in Chapter 3a). The second step is to understand which policies are key in the context of the overarching ambition, and how these policies are affected by the objectives (and measures) of other policies.*

Do you want to go more in depth? Consider exploring the following questions:

1) Are the policy objectives aligned with objectives from the other policies?
    a. Are the policy objectives aligned substantively, i.e. in terms of subject matter?
    b. Are the policy objectives aligned geographically, i.e. in terms of spatial application?
    c. Are the policy objectives aligned 'temporally', i.e. in terms of timeframes for their achievement?

Examples:

- *In the Archipelago Sea, the objective of good environmental status is largely aligned between different policies in relation to nutrient loading. To illustrate, the Marine Strategy uses indicators and status class boundaries for eutrophication that are coherent with those for freshwater environments. The Marine Spatial Plan refers to the good environmental status specified within the River Basin Management Plan and the Marine Strategy. The Baltic Sea Action Plan includes independent nutrient reduction objectives, but it also refers to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in this regard.*
- *The EU Nitrates Directive aims to reduce nitrate pollution from agricultural sources, while the Common Agricultural Policy can encourage intensive farming practices, which may increase nitrate pollution.*
- *The EU Water Framework Directive sets ambitious water quality targets, while the Pesticides Directive allows for the use of certain chemicals that can negatively impact water quality, creating a conflict between the two directives.*
- *The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and its objectives apply across all EU marine waters, ensuring that its spatial application aligns with other instruments like the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and the Zero Pollution Action Plan, facilitating geographical coherence in protecting marine ecosystems.*
- *The EU Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive partly overlap spatially in the coastal areas, but authorities need to produce separate assessments on the same coastal waters in different timeframes. The Habitats Directive assessments and Natura 2000 management plans also operate on a different timeline. This temporal misalignment results in the constant production of new Programs of Measures, adding considerable strain on environmental authorities and challenges in making sure that all relevant measures are included in all Programs of Measures and up to date.*
- *The Barcelona Convention's post-2020 Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity and General Fishery Commission for the Mediterranean and the Black Sea 2030 Strategy are temporally aligned.*

2) Do the policy objectives within the group of policies have the same legal status and power to put into effect action?
    a. Are there differences in how legally binding different objectives are? Are there differences in the enforcement opportunities they encompass?
    b. Do the various objectives entail the same requirements for authorities to take action? Compare, for example, whether the authorities are expected to accomplish the objectives (=obligation of results), or are only obliged to make sufficient efforts to work towards them (=obligations of best effort)?

Example: *In the EU, the policy objectives regarding the achievement of offshore wind energy are quantitative and allow no discretion on the authorities. Member States need to develop tendering procedures to achieve the decided output. On the other hand, the qualitative objective to achieve a Good Environmental Status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive is mainly considered to be an obligation of best effort, and has therefore less power to ensure achievement of the objectives.*

3) Does the policy allow for exemptions from certain objectives? How does the use of these exemptions affect the level of coherence within the policy?
    a. How do potential exemptions from some policy objectives affect the overall policy direction of the group of policies?

Examples:

- *The Renewable Energy Directive III aims to accelerate the production of renewable energy, including offshore wind energy. To facilitate the acceleration, several exemptions are allowed from the Habitats Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Nature Restoration Regulation, especially to simplify the approval of offshore energy projects that can impact biodiversity. As such, the exemptions may negatively impact biodiversity and conflict with the objectives of the biodiversity-related policies.*
- *The Water Framework Directive (WFD) aims to achieve good ecological status of water bodies, amongst other things, through implementing measures to reduce pollution from various sources, including agriculture. Certain agricultural practices (e.g., use of specific pesticides or fertilizers) are however exempted to support agricultural productivity. The exemptions for agricultural practices can lead to increased pollution of water bodies, undermining the ecological status objectives of the WFD.*

4) Are the policy objectives cross-referencing objectives of the other selected policies?

Example: *The Nature Restoration Regulation refers to and is highly complementary to the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. The policy imposes restoration obligations in relation to habitat types protected by the Habitat and Birds Directives, and non-deterioration obligations for*

such areas for which good condition already has been reached. The Nature Restoration Regulation further refers to the EU Climate Law and Renewable Energy Directive III.

Coherence of measures towards the objectives

Whether a policy's objectives are achieved depends not only on the measures of that specific policy, but also on the measures that are put in place by other policies (Figure 11).

Policies that are interrelated are therefore often affected by one another's measures. The success of measures within one policy can have positive spillover effects on other policies. However, trade-offs are also possible. This interplay is important to assess and understand in the external coherence assessment.

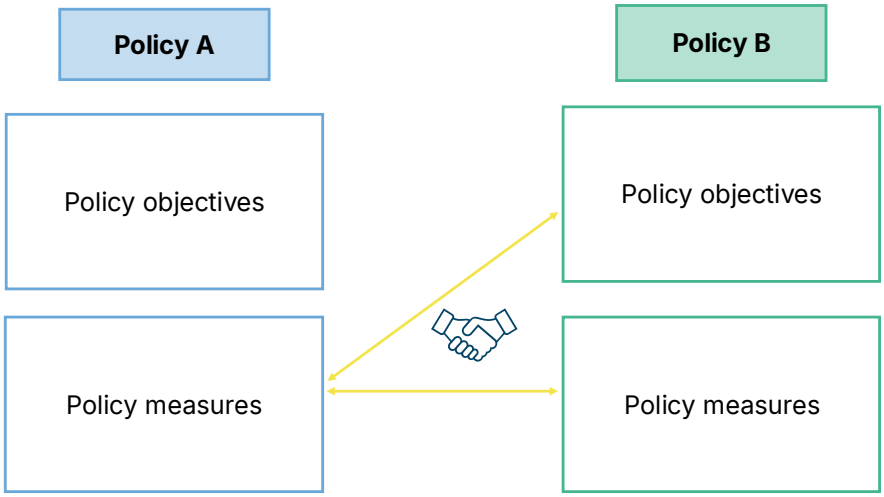


Figure 11 Measures affect other policies' objectives and measures

To begin the assessment, we recommend exploring the following questions:

1. How do the measures of policy A support the objectives and measures of policy B, and vice versa? (pair-wise mapping and comparison)

2. How do the measures in combination support the objectives of the policies included in the assessment?

3. Does the combination of measures contribute to achieving overarching ambitions, such as those within the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Oceans Pact ?

Examples:

- *Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) often aim to conserve marine biodiversity by restricting human activities in designated areas. This can be achieved through establishing MPAs where fishing and other extractive activities are limited or prohibited. On the other hand, fishing zones can be established to support the fishing industry by designating areas where fishing is allowed and regulated. There can be spatial misalignment when MPAs overlap with designated fishing zones. This can lead to conflicts between conservation efforts and fishing activities, undermining both the protection of marine biodiversity and the support for the fishing industry.*
- *Fisheries policies may aim to ensure sustainable fish stocks through annual quotas and seasonal fishing bans. The policy may set annual catch limits based on current stock assessments. On the other hand, a country may aim to adapt to long-term changes in marine ecosystems due to climate change through the implementation of long-term strategies to protect marine biodiversity and habitats. Annual catch limits may however not account for long-term shifts in fish populations due to climate change. This temporal misalignment can lead to overfishing or underutilization of stocks, undermining both sustainability and adaptation objectives.*
- *Most countries in Europe aim to coordinate the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas through long-term marine spatial plans that balance ecological, economic, and social objectives. On the other hand, most countries also have a strong aim to increase renewable energy production through the construction of offshore wind farms to comply with the climate policies. A current acceleration is happening through the fast-tracking of permits and construction timelines to meet renewable energy targets. The long-term nature of Marine Spatial Planning may not align with the urgent timelines for offshore wind development and create incoherent measures.*
- *Certain measures taken pursuant to the Offshore Wind Energy Act in the Netherlands can enhance coherence between policies and interests. To illustrate, the possibility of multi-use wind farms supports additional policy objectives such as aquaculture and biodiversity protection. Another measure that can support biodiversity objectives is the use of non-price ecological criteria in offshore wind energy tenders, which is allowed under the Offshore Wind Energy Act and is also promoted by the EU through the Net-Zero Industry Act and the EU Recommendation on the use of non-price criteria in tender procedures for renewable energy. Another measure that cuts both sides is the support of nature-inclusive design as a requirement under the licenses for offshore wind farms in the Netherlands.*
- *In France, the Programs of Measures developed within the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive refer to one another, and other policies (such as the Habitats Directive) by explaining linkages between measures.*
- *Monitoring measures for offshore wind developers is a possible measure to support the monitoring obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and collect data that feeds into the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive as well.*
- *Measures designed to promote renewable energy can conflict with agricultural policy objectives, leading to horizontal inconsistencies. To illustrate, governments may provide subsidies to encourage the production of biofuels as part of their renewable energy strategy. This aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and lower greenhouse gas emissions. However, agricultural policies often aim to ensure food security and promote sustainable farming practices. The subsidies for biofuel production can lead to a significant portion of*

agricultural land being diverted from food crops to biofuel crops. This can reduce the availability of land for food production, potentially undermining food security and sustainable farming objectives.

Do you want to go more in depth? Be aware of the following:

For the analysis of coherence between policies, the identification of relevant guiding questions for the assessment of measures may depend on what type of policies are being assessed.

To start the formulation of relevant guiding questions, we recommend applying and adjusting the guiding questions from the internal coherence assessment of measures to the external coherence assessment.

For more in-depth assessments in the context of environmental policies, we have developed two illustration cases for the assessment of:

1) Environmental policies towards other environmental policies.
2) Environmental policies towards other types of policies, for instance sectoral policies that regulate economic activities.

Note: *Elements from both illustration cases might be combined, depending on the types of measures. It is important to align the guiding questions with the type of policies that are subject to the assessment.*

Targeted guidance:

How to assess policy coherence between measures of environmental policies?

Policies primarily focused on governing environmental status and protection should be mutually supportive (e.g., Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive, Nature Restoration Regulation). The coherence assessment should focus on understanding whether the policy measures sufficiently promote synergies towards a coherent landscape of environmental policies, for example by asking:

1) What specific natural assets do the various measures of the policies within the group aim to manage? *Examples are individual species, groups of species, habitats, ecosystems.*
2) Do the policy measures complement each other, or do they lead to inconsistencies, fragmentation, and additional burdens? *Examples include terminology and definitions, use of indicators, and definitions of threshold values*.
3) Many environmental policies require strategic plans as a policy measure to coordinate across sectors that cause pressures on nature.
    a. Are all sectoral authorities that might have an impact on the natural asset's environmental condition involved and coordinated in the strategic planning processes?
    b. To what extent are the planning cycles between the selected policies coherent:
        - Are they temporally aligned?
        - Are there collaborative efforts in monitoring and reporting across the policies?
        - Are shared stakeholders and decision-making authorities engaged throughout the planning cycles of various policies to ensure coherence?
        - Are programs of measures compatible and mutually supportive? Are they referring to each other?

Together, these questions may frame the assessment of measures between environmental policies.

It is important to be aware that the level of coherence between policies that belong to the same policy area should be high. This means that the measures and the objectives of such policies should reinforce one another, enabling synergetic planning, policymaking and decision-making processes with positive outcomes for the environment.

Targeted guidance:

How to assess policy coherence between measures of sectoral and environmental policies?

When assessing the coherence of a group of policies that includes at least one sectoral policy (such as Common Fisheries Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, Renewable Energy Directive) alongside an environmental policy (e.g., Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive) it is essential to understand how the combination of policy measures within the group influences its overall policy direction.
This involves examining whether the policy measures are balanced to achieve all policy objectives simultaneously, or if some measures are more influential than others, potentially leading to incoherence where not all policy objectives are met. The assessment should focus on understanding these dynamics across the various policy measures, identifying where trade-offs could occur and where synergies can be pursued.
The following questions are recommended:

1) Which policy measures that are part of the assessment target the same actors or activities?
2) Do the measures provide supporting or conflicting incentives?
    a. If the measures provide conflicting incentives, which of these policy measures are more influential? Compare for example their legal status, enforceability, and impact on decision-making processes.
    b. How does this affect the realization of policy objectives? Does this lead to one policy, or a set of policy objectives, being more easily achieved than others?
3) Are environmental considerations mainstreamed into the sectoral policy?
    a. If the sectoral policy includes subsidies and financial resource allocation, how does this impact the achievement of environmental policy objectives? Do these financial measures create conflicting incentives, or do they support the realization of environmental objectives?
    b. Are the licensing and permitting criteria within the sectoral policy aligned with the indicators and objectives of the environmental policy?
    c. Are the criteria with direct applicability aligned with the indicators and objectives of the environmental policy?

Together, these questions may frame the assessment of the measures between sectoral and environmental policies.

It is important to be aware that trade-offs are common in decision-making processes. Without strong and enforceable measures in the environmental policies, trade-offs can easily have negative consequences for the environmental objectives while fostering economic development.

The implementation of measures of sectoral policies should not hinder progress towards realizing the environmental policies' objectives and measures. This is the minimum level of coherence that should be envisioned in such assessments.

Further reading

For an overview of the references and sources used for the development of this handbook, see References and sources.

For more examples on identified policy (in)coherence challenges, see the Marine Policy Coherence Roadmaps developed within the CrossGov project: Roadmaps - Crossgov Project.

4. Barriers and enablers affecting policy coherence

Introduction

Understanding the level of coherence within and between policies is an important first step towards addressing identified weaknesses or further exploiting identified synergies (Assessing the level of policy coherence). However, to design appropriate approaches to enhance the level of policy coherence, we also need to grasp the reasons behind low or high coherence.

The CrossGov policy coherence framework therefore consists of two parts (Figure 12):
Part A: Assessing the level of policy coherence (Assessing the level of policy coherence).
Part B: Explanatory factors (understanding what factors cause policy (in)coherence)

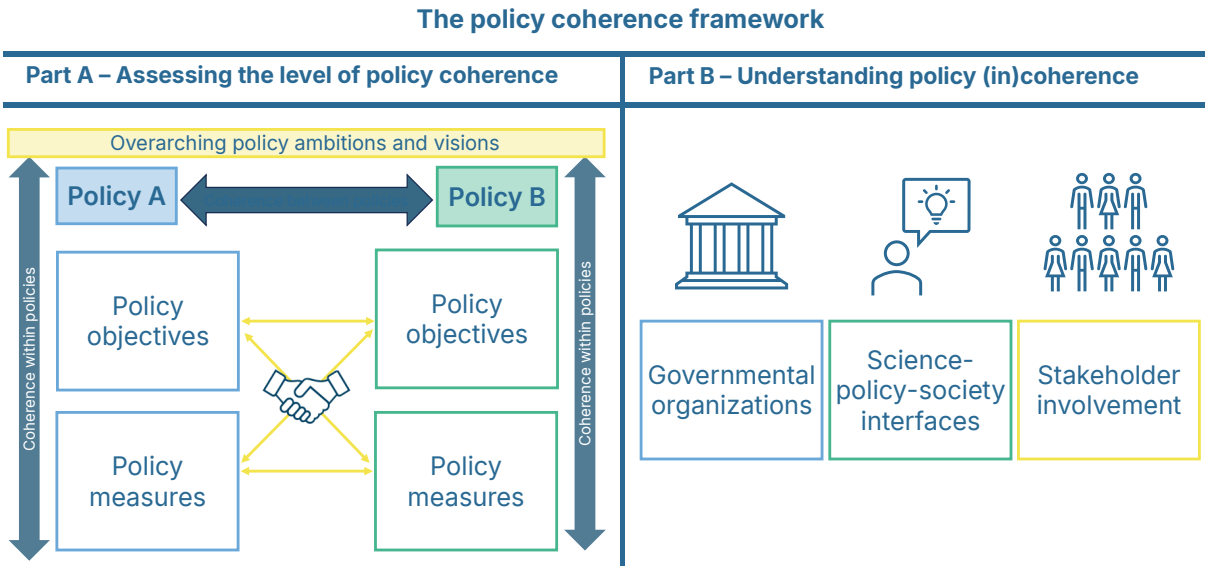


Figure 12 Part A and B of the policy coherence framework

This chapter introduces Part B of the framework and provides guidance to the users of this handbook. This chapter introduces a set of explanatory factors (categories of barriers and enablers) that can help to understand the reasons behind varying levels of policy coherence.

These explanatory factors play a key role in policy design and implementation. They can help pinpoint why policies are incoherent and how coherence can be enhanced. Examples are added throughout the chapter to illustrate various barriers and enablers.

***Note**: Both parts of the framework can be used independently from each other. Our recommendation however is to first assess policy coherence (Part A) and then look at reasons that explain why this situation of (incoherence) occurs (Part B).*

Part B of the framework is structured around three categories of explanatory factors: 1) governmental organizations, 2) science-policy-society interfaces, and 3) stakeholder involvement. Within each of these categories, sub-categories and guiding questions are provided to help you structure your analysis.

A brief introduction to the three categories of explanatory factors

1. Governmental organizations

Governmental organizations hold the primary responsibility for designing and implementing policies. These organizations range from local (such as municipalities) to national (like agencies or ministries) to EU and international levels (for example, EU Directorates, UN agencies). A policy issue is often managed by several governmental organizations. The interactions between these organizations, including coordination, distribution of responsibilities, and power dynamics, affect the design and implementation of policies. This interplay is a key factor in explaining the occurrence of coherence or incoherence.

2. Science-policy-society interfaces

Science-policy-society interfaces (SPSI) describe processes of how knowledge and data is being produced, transferred, and utilized in decision-making processes. Effective SPSIs can promote and support policy coherence, as they allow for evidence-based policy processes. Exploring SPSIs implies to look at the various actors involved in the knowledge system, what type of knowledge is being used, and how it influences decision-making. While the guidance in this chapter provides an easy guide to understand the role of SPSIs for policy coherence, we recommend to consult the CrossGov guidance on SPSI analysis for a more comprehensive assessment methodology for this category. See also the Blueprint to strengthen SPS interfaces in the marine domain, developed in the CrossGov project.

3. Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement describes how different interested and affected parties participate in policymaking and policy implementation. Inclusive and transparent involvement can generally enhance coherence by ensuring that multiple perspectives are considered. In turn, unbalanced stakeholder involvement that is strongly dominated by certain powerful actors can have the opposite effect and cause incoherence. Investigating existing stakeholder involvement mechanisms and power dynamics is therefore important for explaining different levels of coherence between policies.

Guidance

In this chapter, the three categories of explanatory factors are subdivided into more defined sub-categories of barriers and/or enablers. For these sub-categories, brief introductions are provided that explain their role and importance for policy coherence. For each sub-category, we have developed guiding questions that are intended to help you understand what to look for. Examples are added.

The guiding questions are designed to analyze different types of policies or thematic focus areas. Not all questions may be relevant to the policies you are interested in. You should select those guiding questions that are applicable to your specific analysis.

Note: *For each type of explanatory factor, a list of guiding questions helps identify potential reasons for observed coherences or incoherences. These guiding questions are intended as a non-exhaustive list of aspects to consider. How they are used depends on the type and needs of the research.*

There is no hierarchy between the explanatory factors and sub-categories and not all questions may be relevant for each analysis context; select what is relevant.

The list of explanatory factors is non-exhaustive. It is encouraged to reflect upon additional reasons for coherence challenges that are not captured by the current list and add these to the assessment where appropriate. For example, certain coherence challenges stem from historical legal developments and need therefore be understood in a broader political and legal context.

While the policy coherence framework has been developed within the Horizon Europe funded CrossGov project under the leadership of the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), complementary research has been carried out within the Horizon Europe funded BlueGreen Governance project. As partner in the latter project, NIVA had the possibility to verify the structural division of explanatory factors, to identify a typology of sub-categories, and to identify examples through a systematic literature review of coastal and marine governance literature. For the full results of this review, see further 'Institutional barriers and enablers Scientific Review Report' (p.16-27).

Governmental organizations

Governmental organizations hold the primary responsibility for designing and implementing policies. The interactions between organizations, including coordination, distribution of responsibilities, and power dynamics, affect the design and implementation of policies and is a key in explaining the occurrence of coherence or incoherence.

To better understand how governmental organizations affect policy coherence, consider the following aspects:

- ✓ Coordination mechanisms
- ✓ Mandates and roles
- ✓ Geographical and temporal scales
- ✓ Allocation of resources
- ✓ Political and power dynamics

Coordination mechanisms

The organizational landscapes in which policies are implemented are complex. Often, multiple ministries and agencies are involved in the governance of one specific policy issue. Moreover, a policy implemented by one governmental organization can affect policies managed by another organization. Therefore, coordination mechanisms across the various governmental organizations are essential to ensure better alignment and coherence between policies. These coordination mechanisms can be formal or informal and are necessary both across different organizations and within different departments of the same organization.

Guiding questions:

a. Is effective coordination in place across levels of governance?
b. Is effective coordination in place across different governmental organizations that manage specific sectors?
c. Is effective cross-border coordination in place to ensure coherent approaches to transboundary policy issues?
d. Have coordination mechanisms for specific policy issues been established?
e. Are there incentives or obligations for coordination (for example through funding or legal provisions)?

f. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding coordination mechanisms be identified?

***Example of coordination mechanisms**: Regional Seas Conventions provide an important coordination platform to ensure coherent implementation of EU directives, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive or the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, across Member States. At the national level, interministerial steering groups or committees are another mechanism to improve horizontal coherence across sectors (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*

Also other coordination mechanisms have proven some success. At the EU and regional seas levels, mechanisms such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive/Water Framework Directive Common Implementation Strategy Group, or the regional Great North Sea Basin Initiative, and the North Seas Energy Cooperation are important.

Mandates and roles

Having clear mandates and roles is important for coherent policy implementation. This is even more important where multiple governmental organizations are involved, whose policies influence and interact with each other. Understanding how mandates and responsibilities are divided and designated can help identify causes for incoherence.

Guiding questions:

a. Are responsibilities clearly assigned for all policy issues?
b. Do governmental organizations have conflicting or overlapping responsibilities? Or are responsibilities clearly assigned across governance levels and between sectoral governmental organizations?
c. Do governmental organizations have siloed or restricted mandates, which do not incentivise them to coordinate with others?
d. In the event of administrative or political restructuring, is it clear how governance responsibilities have been passed on and which organizations are responsible for what?
e. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding mandates and roles be identified?

***Example of mandates and roles**: Adaptation to climate change in coastal areas, such as flood protection management, often involves various governmental organizations with overlapping mandates and roles. This can result in uncoordinated policy efforts due to a lack of clarity about which organization is responsible, potentially leading to maladaptation. Assigning a lead authority can be one mechanism to clarify responsibilities and improve coordination. (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*

Geographical and temporal scales

Governmental organizations may be operating at different geographical scales. For example, they may be planning for local areas or the entire country, or they might be implementing policies on land, on the coast or at sea. Different organizations may also operate within different timeframes, from short to long-term, or manage policies with different time horizons (such as different reporting cycles or delivery dates). These different geographical and temporal scales can make it challenging to align different policies.

Guiding questions:

a. Do governmental organizations operating at various geographical scales (such as only land; coast or sea) ensure that their policies are aligned?
b. Have differences between ecological and administrative boundaries been considered, and is coordination across these boundaries ensured?
c. How are tensions between policy issues that require long-term planning, and short-term funding or electoral cycles within governmental organizations addressed?
d. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding scales be identified?

***Example of geographical misalignment**: In Norway, the coastal zone is managed by municipalities whereas the open waters are managed by national governmental organizations, which can lead to incoherent policies due to limited coordination and alignment.*

Allocation of resources

To ensure policy coherence, the responsible governmental organizations need to have sufficient resources, for instance to establish coordination mechanisms and enable thorough policy planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

Guiding questions:

a. Is there a continuous and stable resource commitment from the state budget allocated towards various governmental organizations?
b. How balanced is the allocation of resources across organizations?
c. How are budget constraints being addressed?
d. How do budget constraints affect different policy areas?
e. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding resources be identified?

***Example of the role of resources**: Government austerity measures affecting environmental programs or authorities can negatively impact how other sectoral authorities consider environmental effects in their policies, due to limited support, monitoring or enforcement from environmental authorities (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*

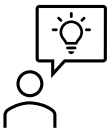
Political and power dynamics

Different governmental organizations hold different levels of power depending on political interests and priorities within a state or a region. For example, often ministries and agencies responsible for large industries with powerful lobbies have stronger political influence than organizations representing environmental interests. Looking into how these dynamics influence policy-making processes can help understand why (in)coherent policies are adopted or implemented.

Guiding questions:

a. Are power imbalances within and between governmental organizations (for example from different sectors) influencing coordination and decision-making processes?
b. Are there mechanisms in place for managing dissent? How do power imbalances influence the resolution of conflicts or the handling of dissent?
c. Is there sufficient political endorsement and support for the policies?
d. On a transboundary level, is there political willingness to coordinate across states?
e. Can any other potential issues or challenges political processes be identified?

***Example of power dynamics**: Despite cross-sectoral and integrated planning processes in place, policy processes can be dominated by economically important and powerful sectors such as fisheries or energy.*



Science-policy-society interfaces

Science-policy-society interfaces (SPSI) describe processes of how knowledge and data is being produced, transferred, and utilized in decision-making processes. Effective SPSIs can promote and support policy coherence, as they allow for evidence-based policy processes. To better understand how science-policy-society interfaces affect policy coherence, consider the following aspects:

- ✓ Data and knowledge
- ✓ Tools and assessments
- ✓ Knowledge transfer mechanisms and platforms
- ✓ Competence and resources

Data and knowledge

In order to deliver coherent policies, it is essential to have a strong evidence-base to inform policy design and implementation. Relevant data and knowledge about the policy issue need to be available, accessible and useable by decision-makers. Monitoring systems specified in policy frameworks can serve as a crucial source of evidence.

Guiding questions:

a. Is data of suitable quality available and accessible in a timely manner to support the policy process?
b. Is data from various disciplines accessible to decision-makers?
c. Are data and knowledge shared across countries to support transboundary policy processes?
d. Are requirements for data collection harmonized or standardized across policies (for example through the use of shared indicators, covering same geographical scales or timeseries)?
e. Do policies set up collective monitoring systems to support the monitoring of shared or interconnected policy issues?
f. Are there any knowledge gaps? Are the knowledge gaps openly addressed?
g. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding data sharing be identified?

Example of accessible data: *Strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) for offshore energy projects require that comprehensive environmental data is accessible. Open-access platforms, supported by research projects and established across states, can be one important source of open access environmental data.*

Example of indicator alignment: *Several EU directives, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive, mandate monitoring of environmental status using specific indicators. Aligning these indicators and reporting timeframes can reduce the burden on knowledge providers and facilitate the use of environmental data across different geographical scales.*

Tools and assessments

To create robust science-policy-society interfaces, it is important to consider whether relevant tools are accessible and used appropriately, as this supports the uptake and utilisation of knowledge in policy processes. Such tools include procedures, methods and platforms for conducting environmental assessments, as well as other approaches to showcase the complexity of policy problems.

Guiding questions:

a. Are environmental assessments conducted at the relevant geographical scale for a policy issue?
b. How are relevance, credibility and legitimacy of environmental assessments ensured?
c. How broad is the scope of an impact assessment? Are all relevant impacts, including environmental impacts, sufficiently considered?
d. Are other planning tools used?
e. Are all the key providers of data/knowledge identified and involved?
f. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding assessments and tools be identified?

Example of scenario development as joint tool: *The development of scenarios is another valuable tool for supporting the policy planning process. Evidence-based scenario planning can facilitate the integration and use of scientific knowledge in policy processes, aiding in the identification of future trade-offs and potential synergies. Additionally, scenarios can help foster a shared understanding of problems among various stakeholders (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*

Knowledge transfer mechanisms and platforms

Knowledge transfer mechanisms and platforms play a central role in delivering the available data and information into decision making processes for evidence-based policies. To understand coherence challenges, it is therefore also relevant to consider how the available knowledge is being transferred between the various actors, such as scientists, decision-makers and the wider public.

Guiding questions:

a. Do knowledge platforms exist that compile and share data with decision-makers and the wider public? What type of actors are involved in these platforms and what are the challenges?
b. Which mechanisms for knowledge transfer are used? Is the communicated knowledge understandable to policy makers and the wider public?
c. How is data from diverse sources used in decision-making processes?
d. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding knowledge transfer platforms be identified?

***Example of joint platform**: Established partnerships or information platforms that compile and share knowledge on a specific coastal region across various actors can contribute to better informed and coordinated policy efforts, as well as increase public awareness (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*

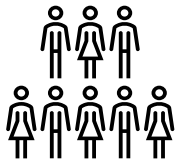
Competence and resources

A diverse and complementary set of skills, along with adequate human and financial resources within the SPSI system, can enhance policy coherence. Policy planning and implementation for improved coherence demands a thorough understanding of the complex interconnections between policy issues, requiring expertise from various disciplines and sufficient resources.

Guiding questions:

a. Do actors in the SPSI system have sufficient competence to understand and deal with complex thematic interlinkages? Is training or capacity building ensured to address competence gaps?
b. Is there sufficient funding, infrastructure and human resources to ensure knowledge generation and collaborative interactions between various actors in the SPSI system?

***Example on learning and capacity-building:** Taking effects on the marine environment into consideration during municipal spatial planning processes requires specific competence about both the legal requirements as well as environmental aspects. Learning material about specific policy issues or guidance from national government on which aspects should be considered in the policy planning or implementation can enhance such processes. (Trubbach, Johannesen and Platjouw, 2025 (forthcoming)).*



Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement describes how different interested and affected parties participate in policymaking and policy implementation. Appropriate stakeholder involvement can play an important role in coherent policy making and implementation. To better understand how stakeholder involvement can affect policy coherence, consider the following aspects:

Adequate and effective involvement

The involvement of stakeholders at various stages in the policy process can enable more robust, better-informed policies, and more effective implementation. Adequate and effective stakeholder participation provides a more holistic perspective on a policy issue which in turn can enable more coherent policy decisions.

Guiding questions:

a. Are stakeholders involved at a geographical scale relevant to the policy issue (for example, stakeholders from different countries for transboundary issues)?
b. Are the involved stakeholders representative, for example of relevant sectors, societal interests and governance levels? Is the representation balanced?
c. Are some stakeholders more powerful than others? For example, do some stakeholders have more access to resources or specialized knowledge than others?
d. Are stakeholder involvement processes informal or formalized, for example through partnerships, protocols and guidelines?
e. Is the involvement of stakeholders transparent?
f. Is the level of involvement adequate to support efficient and informed decision-making and policy implementation?
g. Are there mechanisms to deal with conflicting interests?
h. How does the allocation of resources for inclusive processes compare to the outcomes of the policy process? Is the resource use proportionate?
i. Do participants consider the processes for participation and subsequent decision-making as fair and legitimate?
j. Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding stakeholder involvement be identified?

Example of broad and representative stakeholder involvement: *Complex policy issues affect and involve numerous stakeholders. In Norway, the ecological degradation of the Oslofjord led the government to initiate the development of an action plan to restore the Fjord. A kick-off conference was held with over 260 participants from various sectors, governance levels, scientists, and interest groups. Stakeholders were asked to identify knowledge gaps and provide recommendations on priority issues for the plan. While national authorities then took over for the detailed planning of policy measures, the initial stakeholder involvement ensured that diverse perspectives and local and expert knowledge formed the foundation of the planning process.*

Further reading

For an overview of the references and sources used for the development of this handbook, see References and sources.

A more comprehensive methodological guidance on the assessment and understanding of science-policy-society interfaces has also been developed in the CrossGov project and is available here: Blueprint to strengthen SPS interfaces in the marine domain.

5. Assessing policy coherence following the Better Regulation guidelines and tools

When the European Commission proposes new legislation or evaluates policies, the (draft) policy needs to be assessed against several criteria in line with the Better Regulation guidelines and tools. The criteria are: efficiency, effectiveness, added value, relevance, and coherence.

The five criteria are closely interrelated. To illustrate, coherence can contribute to effectiveness: when policies are better aligned, and do not hinder one another's implementation, the achievement of the envisioned goals, results and/or impacts is more likely. In other words, effectiveness can be facilitated through enhanced coherence. While all five criteria are important for the assessment and evaluation of policies, this Handbook provides complementary guidance specifically for the assessment of coherence.

Policy coherence plays an important role in the context of impact assessments, evaluations and fitness checks (specifically tools 11, 15, and 47). Since the available guidance in the Better Regulation guidelines and tools is limited for coherence, this chapter provides more specific guiding questions that can help consultants and other actors to assess policy coherence in a more systematic and comprehensive manner.

Better Regulation – selected tools for additional guidance

Chapter 2 – How to carry out an impact assessment?
TOOL #11. Format of an impact assessment report
TOOL #15. How to set the objectives?
Chapter 6 – How to carry out an evaluation and fitness check?
TOOL #47. Evaluation criteria and questions

Impact Assessments

Introduction

Impact assessments are used as ex-ante analyses of policy problems and the identification of possible policy responses. As part of the impact assessment, different policy options, and their effects, should be assessed. Both effects on the environment, and on other EU policy objectives and initiatives are part of the assessment.

Our guidance on the Format of the impact assessment report

Tool #11 "Format of the impact assessment report" outlines the elements to be included in the impact assessment. Coherence is addressed as one of the five criteria when comparing potential policy options to identify the most preferable one (Section 7 – How

do the options compare). We recommend expanding and specifying the scope for assessing policy coherence by defining a relevant group of policies.

Whereas in many cases the policies selected to be part of the external coherence assessment are complementary (for example, different environmental policies), we recommend extending the group of policies to those that apply to similar geographical regions or target similar stakeholder groups and policy actors but pursue different objectives. This should ensure that potential trade-offs with other policies are identified and accounted for.

Once the group of relevant policies has been delineated, the coherence of various policy options should be assessed within this group. While tool #11 provides guidance for coherence assessment on the level of policy objectives, we recommend extending the external coherence assessment to analyse how the measures within the various policy options interact with other policies' measures and objectives.

To conduct the external policy coherence assessment of the different policy options, we recommend addressing the following guiding questions:

On the level of objectives:

1) What are the objectives of the policies?
    a. Are the objectives of the policies supporting or enhancing the achievement of other objectives? Are the objectives of the policy option supporting or enhancing the achievement of other objectives (from the group of policies)?

2) To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions?
    a. Which policies are key in relation to the overarching ambitions?
    b. How are these policies affected by the objectives of other policies?

On the level of measures and interactions with policy objectives:

1) How do the measures of policy A (here, the policy option from the impact assessment) support the objectives and measures of policy B (a policy from the group of policies), and vice versa? (pair-wise mapping and comparison)
2) How do the measures in combination support the objectives of the policies included in the assessment?
3) Do the combination of measures contribute to achieving overarching ambitions, such as those within the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Oceans Pact?

Do you want to go more in depth, or would you like to see examples? Consider the detailed guiding questions in Chapter 3b of this handbook.

Our guidance on setting the policy objectives

The BRGT tool #15 "How to set objectives" calls for highlighting the link between multiple objectives and potential trade-offs, for example through a graphically depicted problem tree. The tool also suggests describing the policy objectives' contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and indicators.

We recommend that the process of setting policy objectives explicitly takes account the internal coherence of policies. This includes assessing whether the different objectives within the same policy are synergetic or if trade-offs occur, as well as how aligned the objectives are with overarching policy ambitions. In addition to the Sustainable Development Goals, this may include objectives from the European Green Deal, Oceans Pact, Water Resilience Strategy, or other instruments.

We suggest addressing the following guiding questions for the internal dimension of coherence:

1) What are the objectives of the policy?
   If multiple objectives: Are they mutually supportive or in potential conflict?
2) To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions? Are these overarching objectives mainstreamed into the policy? Do the objectives of the policy support or conflict with the overarching objectives?

Do you want to go more in depth, or would you like to see examples? Consider the detailed guiding questions in Chapter 3a of this handbook.

Evaluations and Fitness Checks

Introduction

Ex-post analyses are conducted of a single policy (evaluation) or a set of policies (fitness check) to assess their performance along five criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and EU added value. To support the analysis, documents from the impact assessment phase on how the policy was expected to achieve its objectives, as well as experience from the policies' implementation can provide more information on expected and unexpected impacts of the policy.

It should be noted that coherence is strongly interrelated with the criterion of effectiveness. Our CrossGov policy coherence framework does only provide guidance for the assessment of coherence, whereas relevant aspects related to effectiveness can be considered using the Better Regulation guidelines and tools.

Our guidance on evaluation criteria and questions

Tool #47 of the Better Regulation Toolbox provides relevant guiding questions on the coherence criteria. We recommend following the steps outlined in this tool and provide additional guidance and specifications.

The tool notes that an evaluation or fitness check for a given policy should assess coherence with policies in a related field that are expected to work together. In addition to assessing coherence with policies that are intended to be complementary, we recommend expanding the scope of analysis to those policies that apply to similar geographical regions or target similar stakeholder groups and policy actors. Assessing coherence across this wider group of policies should ensure that potential trade-offs with other policies are recognized and accounted for.

Moreover, the tool #47 sets out a list of guiding questions for each evaluation criterion. Coherence is described as important for single policy evaluations but is particularly relevant in fitness checks. We support the tool's approach to assess coherence both internally (meaning within a policy) and externally (in relation to other policies). Whereas the provided examples of coherence evaluation questions remain broad, we recommend following a more detailed coherence assessment.

We recommend dividing the coherence assessment into two parts:

1) Focus on the coherence of objectives, and
2) Analyse whether the policy measures contribute towards achieving both its own and other policies' objectives.

When assessing internal coherence, we recommend addressing the following guiding questions:

On the level of policy objectives:

1) What are the objectives of the policy?
   If there are multiple objectives, are they mutually supportive or in potential conflict?
2) To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions?
   Are the overarching ambitions mainstreamed into the policy? Do the objectives of the policy support or conflict with the overarching ambitions?

On the level of policy measures and their interactions with policy objectives:

1) What are the measures of the policy?
   a. If the policy has multiple objectives, it is important to explore which measures support which (subset of) objectives.
2) Do the measures also contribute to overarching ambitions, such as those of the Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Oceans Pact?

Do you want to go more in depth, or would you like to see examples? Consider the detailed guiding questions in Chapter 3a of this handbook.

When assessing external coherence, we recommend addressing the following guiding questions:

On the level of policy objectives:

1) What are the objectives of the policies?
    a. Are the objectives of the policies supporting or enhancing the achievement of other objectives?
2) To what extent are the objectives aligned with overarching ambitions?
    a. Which policies are key in relation to the overarching ambitions?
    b. How are these policies affected by the objectives of other policies?

On the level of policy measures and their interactions with policy objectives:

1) How do the measures of policy A support the objectives and measures of policy B, and vice versa? (pair-wise mapping and comparison)
2) How do the measures in combination support the objectives of the policies included in the assessment?
3) Do the combination of measures contribute to achieving overarching ambitions, such as those within the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, or the Oceans Pact?

Do you want to go more in depth, or would you like to see examples? Consider the detailed guiding questions in Chapter 3b of this handbook.

Annex - Understanding policy coherence in relation to other relevant concepts

Policy coherence refers to the alignment of policies across various policy areas, governance levels, and geographical regions. While policy coherence or incoherence reflects the state of the policy landscape, efforts to enhance coherence are closely tied to other established concepts. The recognition that complex societal issues require holistic and integrated management approaches is not novel, and over time several conceptual frameworks and terminologies related to policy coherence have emerged. These include policy integration, whole-of or joined-up government approaches, mainstreaming, the nexus approach and multilevel governance. Research in this field provides valuable insights into the necessity of coherence, methods for analysis, and the factors that influence coherence.

Policy integration

Policy integration can be regarded as the umbrella concept of inter-sectoral policymaking. Policy integration has often been described as a stepwise approach for how organizations (such as sectoral authorities) move from siloed policy formulation and implementation towards increased cooperation, coordination and finally towards integrated policymaking (Meijers & Stead, 2004). Figure 13 below shows the characteristics associated with the steps of integrated policymaking. Policy coherence can be understood to increase along the ladder of integration as priorities and objectives become increasingly aligned. Policy integration is motivated by the pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness. Integrated policies are more efficient because they minimize conflicts and foster synergies across different policy areas, leading to lower costs. Likewise, integrated policies are more effective as these synergies and reduced conflicts facilitate the achievement of policy objectives without being compromised by other policies. Consequently, coherence is a fundamental attribute of integrated policymaking, linking the concept to both efficiency and effectiveness.

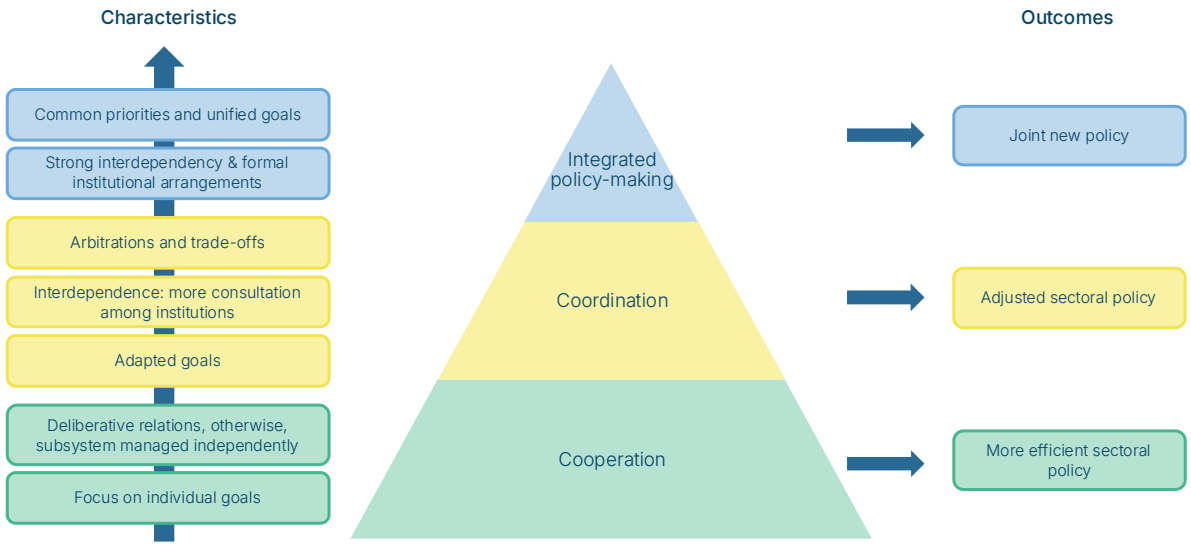


Figure 13 Dimensions of integrated policy making, adapted from Meijers & Stead 2004 and Metcalf's scale on policy coherence as presented in UN CEPA 2021

Government- and governance-centric approaches

In **government-centric approaches**, terms like "holistic government," "whole-of-government," and "joined-up government" describe efforts to reform the public sector by overcoming fragmentation across organizational boundaries. These approaches aim for more integrated, cross-sectoral strategies. This integration is primarily achieved through procedural and organizational means, such as inter-departmental and inter-administrative coordination efforts, including common plans or task forces. These efforts facilitate the exchange of information and the creation of a shared understanding of policy issues, moving along the ladder of integration (Tosun and Lang 2017). In **governance-centric approaches**, policy integration describes how decision-making processes move away from hierarchical structures and integrate non-governmental actors such as civil society and private sector (Meijers and Stead 2004; Tosun and Lang 2017).

Environmental policy integration

Environmental policy integration refers to the incorporation of environmental considerations into other sectoral policies (Persson, 2004). The concept, which originated in the Brundtland Report of 1987, recognizes that environmental problems are cross-sectoral and that environmental authorities alone have limited capacity to address the challenges arising from externalities of various sectors' activities (Nilsson et al., 2012). Compared to policy integration in a broader sense, environmental policy integration does not seek to eliminate policy silos but aims to embed environmental concerns and objectives within different policy areas to achieve a "greening" of sectoral governance (Venghaus et al., 2019). The term "policy mainstreaming", which has been used to describe the integration of social policy concerns across various policy areas, has increasingly been used interchangeably with the term of environmental policy

integration. Environmental policy integration can therefore be regarded as a mechanism to increase coherence between environmental and other sectoral policy areas.

Nexus approach

The nexus approach, developed in the 1980s, is a valuable tool for identifying and analyzing the complex interdependencies and feedback loops across different policy areas or resources. This method has been utilized by numerous international forums and organizations to visualize the complex challenges that arise at the intersection of these areas. The climate-biodiversity nexus and the water-energy-land nexus are prominent examples. For instance, when examining hydropower construction through the water-energy-land nexus, the impacts on water allocation management and land use are also considered (Estoque, 2023). While the nexus serves as an analytical framework, assessing policy coherence across its various components offers a useful method to understand the interconnected nature of policies within the nexus.

Multilevel governance

Multilevel governance is another related concept of high relevance for coherence. Multilevel governance has been developed to describe the transformation of the political and institutional landscape in the context of the post-Maastricht EU integration process. Multilevel governance describes non-hierarchical and mutual relationships across different levels of governance (Thomann and Sager 2017). In addition, non-state, private sector and informal actors are increasingly included into governance structures, often referred to as a decentralized form of "nested or polycentric governance". Interactions in multilevel governance landscapes can be studied both vertically and horizontally. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development has defined policy coherence as one of the principles for good governance in these complex landscapes (OECD 2016).

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