

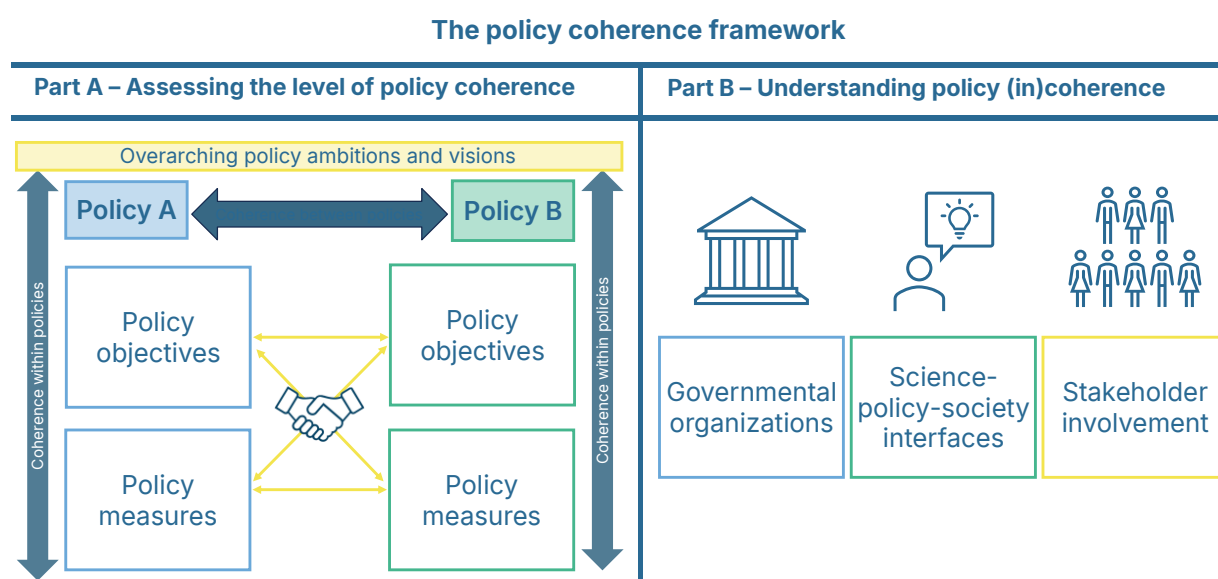
# Quick guide - The policy coherence framework

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:**

**Part A** - Assessing the level of policy coherence

**Part B** - Explanatory factors (understanding what factors cause policy (in)coherence)



## Part A – Assessing the level of policy coherence

### Assessing policy 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.

### 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.

**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?

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

## **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.

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

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.

## **Assessing policy 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.

### **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.

#### **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?

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

## **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.

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.

**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 ?

### **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. (See full [guide](#))

## **Part B – Barriers and enablers affecting policy coherence**

This part 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.



### **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.**

#### **Coordination mechanisms**

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

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

## **Mandates and roles**

- Are responsibilities clearly assigned for all policy issues?
- Do governmental organizations have conflicting or overlapping responsibilities? Or are responsibilities clearly assigned across governance levels and between sectoral governmental organizations?
- Do governmental organizations have siloed or restricted mandates, which do not incentivise them to coordinate with others?
- 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?
- Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding mandates and roles be identified?

## **Geographical and temporal scales**

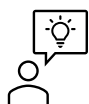
- Do governmental organizations operating at various geographical scales (such as only land; coast or sea) ensure that their policies are aligned?
- Have differences between ecological and administrative boundaries been considered, and is coordination across these boundaries ensured?
- How are tensions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

## **Allocation of resources**

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

## **Political and power dynamics**

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



## 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.**

### Data and knowledge

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

### Tools and assessments

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

### Knowledge transfer mechanisms and platforms

- 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?
- Which mechanisms for knowledge transfer are used? Is the communicated knowledge understandable to policy makers and the wider public?
- How is data from diverse sources used in decision-making processes?
- Can any other potential issues or challenges regarding knowledge transfer platforms be identified?

## Competence and resources

- 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?
- Is there sufficient funding, infrastructure and human resources to ensure knowledge generation and collaborative interactions between various actors in the SPSI system?



## 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.**

### Adequate and effective involvement

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

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