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### **The Environment Test and Policy Integration: a New Dawn or a False Start?**

Since the late 1980s, the 'environment test' (e-test) has been used by the United Kingdom (UK) and the Netherlands as a key part of their environmental policy integration (EPI) strategies, and has provided a model for the EU's Impact Assessment. The aim of the e-test is to integrate environmental considerations into decisions across all sectors at an early stage in the policy process. It does so by assessing different policy options for their respective environmental impacts so that ideally the most benign policy direction can then be pursued. The EPI systems used in both the Netherlands and the UK have been highly acclaimed by the OECD and some academics. However, critics suggest that the performance of e-testing within these two countries is actually very inconsistent. This paper, therefore, aims to compare the UK and the Netherlands' experiences of employing e-tests through the use of primary and secondary analysis of existing literature and elite interviews. It illustrates that on the surface the Netherlands' employment of the 'e-test' has been viewed as a relative success, yet in practice its impact appears to be limited. Similarly, it highlights that it has been sparsely and weakly conducted in the UK and has failed to have a cross-sectoral impact. This contrasting experience suggests that there is no guarantee that the influence of e-testing will necessarily be as widespread as intended or reported by national governments or the OECD. This paper argues that the success of e-testing may well depend on how well policy makers are stimulated rather than forced to conduct them and how much sustained central leadership is provided.

Key words: environmental policy integration, environment test, sustainable development