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Greener Technologies Through Greener Policies? Environmental policy integration into Finnish technology policies

The integration of environmental principles into other policies is perceived important by many so that environmental problems, such as the global warming, can be combated as effectively and efficiently as possible. Policy integration can be an effective way to achieve political goals, but it can also be a way to diffuse attention and to obliquely resist the political goals one is declaring support for. Some methods for assessing environmental policy integration have been developed but only a few empirical assessments demonstrating the current state of policy integration have been carried out.

This paper examines the integration of environmental policy principles in the field of technology and innovation policy. We begin by exploring the discussions on what environmental policy integration actually means and what it could be with respect to technology policy. Subsequently, the integration of environmental conditions into Finnish technology policies is assessed empirically. The integration is examined at all levels including overall policy strategies and individual policy instruments, such as R&D funding and technology R&D programmes. The funding procedures and the actual decisions as well as programme outputs are looked at to provide concrete evaluation of the extent of environmental policy integration. Moreover, the trends in policy development and the implications for environmental policy are discussed.

The findings show that overall the actors of the Finnish technology policy have grasped the idea of environmental protection, and environmental policy integration can be perceived especially in the strategy level and in some technology programmes with a focus on environmental technologies. However, the integration is thus far not overarching and, while positive environmental impacts in research projects are encouraged, no assessment of the negative ones are required in funding applications.

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