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Institutional provisions for environmental policy integration in Norway. The case of the ‘Environmental Profile of the National Budget’ and the ‘National Environmental Monitoring System’

Norwegian environmental public policy implementation is based on the principle of sectoral responsibility. This implies that specific ministries and directorates have the responsibility to implement and enforce political decisions made by the Norwegian Parliament. The sectoral responsibility may strengthen a greening of sectoral policies, but is it a potential barrier for national environmental policy integration? With its inter-departmental and interdisciplinary features, environmental policy issues are horizontal by nature. What kinds of institutional provisions are successful to promote integration within and between various sectors?

The first effort discussed in this paper, ‘the Environmental Profile of the State Budget’, was proposed in 1989. When environmental issues were connected to traditional finance policy, environmental concerns were expected to be integrated into other policy fields. All Ministries have to provide an overview of their annual “green” expenditures in the budget.

The second provision presented and evaluated is the ‘National Environmental Management System’ (NEMS). It was proposed in 1997. To our knowledge, NEMS is a unique effort trying to develop a functioning framework for managing not only the sectoral efforts, but the overall environmental policy implementation in Norway.

Despite the promising features of these institutional provisions, our findings indicate that environmental policy integration remains limited. Consequently, the paper ends with a discussion on the lessons learned from the ‘Environmental Profile’ and the ‘National Environmental Management System’. How and under which conditions can these institutional provisions trigger stronger environmental policy integration?