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### **Policy Integration and Capacity-Building in Regional Sustainable Development: Comparative Analysis of Experiences in Europe**

The main objective of the article is to explore the need for policy integration and capacity-building in sustainable development policy-making on the regional level. This will include, on the one hand, an analysis of the management of cross-cutting issues in policy-making which transcend the boundaries of established policy fields and which do not correspond to the institutional responsibility of individual departments or stakeholders. Policy integration is of particular importance for sustainable development policy-making which has the aim to integrate various policies in an effort to move towards a more integrated policy-making concept. Therefore, integrated policy-making refers to both, horizontal policy integration (between different policy fields) and vertical policy integration (between different tiers of government as well as stakeholders). On the other hand, there may well be a gap between the need for coherent and integrated policies and the capacity to achieve it. Therefore, the article will investigate the various institutional and stakeholder capacities which are necessary to achieve sound policy integration for sustainable development.

The article will put its emphasis on the regional level for sustainable development policy-making. In recent years, the regional level has become of increasing importance for sustainable development because of its spatial dimension, its role in multi-level governance, and its role in policy implementation.

The article will present the outcomes of the work in the REGIONET project (Regional Sustainable Development in Europe) which was funded under the EU's 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research. Through seventeen country studies and various international workshops, the project could gain a comparative and comprehensive overview of regional sustainable development in Europe.

Some conclusions:

- There is a re-shaping of the meaning of 'regions' in the context of regional sustainable development.
- Policy integration: a strong focus is given to the environmental dimension; slow and unspecific development of departmental cooperation.
- Structural Funds and inter-regional cooperation increase the capacity-building in the regions; evaluation methods are not only aid for decision-making, but also important for participation and capacity-building.
- Current trend: intersecting 'spheres of governance' instead of top-down; the major challenge is to integrate the different objectives of the stakeholders in the regions.