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## **International Peer Review as a Tool Promoting Policy Integration: The Case of the OECD Environmental Performance Reviews**

Intergovernmental organisations, even when lacking coercive powers, can have an important role in promoting policy integration through what has been called ‘idea-games’, relying on moral persuasion, and processes such as socialisation, and imitation. This paper examines the OECD Environmental Performance Reviews, carried out since 1992, as a prime example of such ‘soft enforcement’ mechanism. While policy integration is not explicitly mentioned among the primary objectives of the review programme, its importance is implicitly recognised given that one of the three parts of the reviews is dedicated to an analysis of integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies in the framework of sustainable development.

The impact of the reviews on policy integration takes place through three main pathways. Firstly, the review process itself forces authorities from different sectors to get together and come up with a common position on the issues addressed in the review. This impact is particularly strong in countries with weak tradition of policy integration and cooperation between authorities from different sectors. Secondly, the review report and its recommendations can be used by the environmental authorities in order to persuade actors in other sectors to integrate environmental concerns in their policies. In both cases, the influence of the reviews on integration crucially depends on the prestige, authority and credibility of the OECD among the non-environmental actors as an independent organisation with economic development as its leading objective. The environmental authorities thus use the OECD’s reputation in their efforts to gain legitimacy in the face of more powerful economic sectors. Thirdly, the reviews provide a broad picture – a baseline – of the environmental and environmentally-related policies of the country, helping the government to keep track of the policies across the board, an aspect that has become increasingly valuable especially at the European level, dominated by the somewhat fragmented work focusing on the implementation of the EU regulations.

The main obstacles preventing the OECD reviews from fulfilling their potential as promoters of policy integration have to do with the lameness of the public debate following the reviews, the decline of the OECD’s role as a major player in international policies, and the country-specific political context.