Benefits of Peer Learning/Peer Review as a governance mechanism for policy implementation

14th ESDN Workshop

Developing the ESDN peer leaning approach for the SDGs

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”Ultimately, - it’s all about governance”

EU 1st VP Timmermans
UN SD summit, 27.9.15
Overview

1. Peer learning/Peer review in the in the wider governance concept
   *Sustaining Sustainability revisited*

2. Reflections on the Workshop’s Discussion Paper

3. Recommendations
1. Peer learning/review in the wider governance concept

**Five normative Governance principles for SD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of integration</th>
<th>Governance principle</th>
<th>What needs to be coordinated/integrated?</th>
<th>Challenge for a governance for SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy sectors / areas</td>
<td>Horizontal coordination/integration</td>
<td>Multiple sectors: economic, social and environmental policies</td>
<td>Policy coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy levels</td>
<td>Vertical coordination/integration</td>
<td>Multiple levels: local, subnational, national and supranational</td>
<td>Links/cooperation of governments and administrations at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Multiple actors: decision-makers and stakeholders from politics, business and civil society</td>
<td>Stakeholder participation in discussion and decision-making processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td><strong>Reflexivity</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge and experience from various areas in society (&quot;walks of life&quot;)</td>
<td>Continuous reflection of ones decisions</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Intergenerational justice</td>
<td>Long- and short-term thinking</td>
<td>Long-term thinking despite short election cycles</td>
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*Source: Niestroy (2014: 158, adapted from Jacob et al. 2013: 18 and Steurer 2010: 37)*
1. Peer learning/review in the wider governance concept

**Sustaining Sustainability revisited**

Study on 9 EU Member States:
Multi-sector, - level, - actor governance, incl.
- broader political and administrative framework
- different practice of stakeholder participation
- role and function of SD Councils
- different understanding of SD strategies, depending on the prevailing governance style

- **Starting point:**
  - Peer learning is very much needed,
  - Europe’s asset is the variety of approaches

- Study became a peer learning process itself
- SD councils as ‘agent’, advisor and communicator
- Moving towards SD is a learning process
Context matters:
Each country has a different starting point
=> Important area for peer learning
=> “CBDG” and metagovernance is recommended

Niestroy (2005): Sustaining Sustainability;
2. Reflections on the Workshop’s Discussion Paper

1) Which peers to involve?
   a) Government – Stakeholders
   b) Within government: bridging the domestic and external strand

2) What type of peer review?
   For SD strategies/policies: stakeholder peer reviews (Business, Science, NGOs)
   France, Netherlands, Germany

3) Agenda 2030 reinvigorates:
   North – South constellations in peer learning/peer reviews are needed
Change of consumption patterns and behaviour:
2) Why civil society matters even more

Source: Human Development Report (UNDP 2013: 35, with adaptations)
Ecological Footprint Per Person and HDI of Nations by World Regions (2012)

Source: Global Footprint Network (data 2012; own selection of countries)
Universal SDGs:
Three tracks to be pursued with SD lens, also in peer reviews
=> 3) N – S constellations in peer learning/peer reviews are needed

Source: Niestroy, DIE discussion paper (forthcoming)
2. Reflections on the Workshop’s Discussion Paper

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3. Recommendations

1) Multi-stakeholder setting => different "circles" of peers:, need to deliberate "among themselves".
   This is OK and needed, but not enough. For ESDN:
   • **Conduct inner circle / "life in Ministries" type of peer learning** where needed (e.g. Dutch EU Presidency Workshop), but be more open about it where possible ....
   • **Join up with initiatives for stakeholder peer learning**, e.g. the EESC Civil Society platform / proactively support it. Widen the pool of "selected stakeholders" to less involved groups.
   • **Promote and foster stakeholder peer reviews and partnerships for review.**
     Involve countries where organised civil society has weak links to government and there is no culture of open dialogue yet. Peer review involving such countries should have additional action to help CSOs becoming vocal partners.
   • **Develop a wider menu of peer models**, not only the rather large-scale peer reviews we have seen on SD strategies. Think of organising short, small and quick peer support actions on concrete SD questions in a country.

2) Within governments => a lot of work to do on better linking the domestic (largely environmental) and external strand (dev’t coop. /foreign affairs). This is also what stakeholders expect governments to do. For ESDN:
   • This should be a primary goal
   • Support and engineer where possible to get the SDGs in other Ministries; link to colleagues at working level, e.g. to the Focal Points for PCD

3) ESDN's one unique selling point => country level information
   • Put more emphasis on the country profiles on the website: updating more often, more regularly (e.g. through results of inner circle meetings – see 1)

4) Beyond the scope so far => For peer learning, we also need to involve countries and actors from the South. This should in particular apply to peer reviews.
   • Try to stimulate your governments to establish "partnerships for review" with countries outside Europe, e.g. like Finland – Columbia
   • See 1) on less vocal civil society
Comparative country studies on governance for SD

2014: 14 countries in Asia and Europe

9 EU MSs: 2005 and follow-up

2013: 5 finalists - Finland, Bhutan, Costa Rica, Ghana, Tasmania