

Topic 1: The political value-added of a European set of SDIs

Question 1:

Under what conditions can SDIs play their role as a supporting tool to implement SD policies? Do you know examples of how SDIs have influenced political decisions?

- Interaction of SDIs with national context & political issues depends on their importance
- SDIs must be taken up by the media to foster pressure
- SDIs should be closely related to strategy processes & political debate in general
- Evidence-based policy-making is based on the citizens' agenda: indicators should have a "social meaning"
- Benchmarking has a different meaning to politicians (sometimes reluctant, only interested when highly ranked) and public administrators (use it to foster action and improve rating)

Question 2:

What can we learn from the use of indicators in the Lisbon Strategy for increasing the political value-added of SDIs at both the EU level and in your country?

- Consensus between EU & Member States important for implementation process – only this makes strategies a sharp instrument
- Lisbon Strategy has strong institutions as drivers; SD lacks strong institutions (FoP are used because no other institution as partner for European Council)

- Political coordination and institutional context influences the outcomes of strategy processes
- Improved relationship between SD and Lisbon coordinators is important, both on the EU and the Member States level

Topic 2: Visibility of the Eurostat SDI set and the EU SDS at the EU level and in Member States

Question 1:

How visible are the Eurostat SDI set and the EU SDS objectives in the EU policies? How could their visibility be increased?

- EU SDS is an adopted policy process, therefore, EC services can refer to it
- EU SDS is important to measure new EC policy proposals against SD objectives
- Common set of EU SDIs in order to measure progress towards EU SDS: focus on common EU issues
- SDI set helps to make issues more visible for general discussions, e.g. climate change

Question 2:

How visible are the Eurostat SDIs and the EU SDS in your country? How could their visibility be increased?

- Visibility can only be increased if SDIs are meaningful at the Member States level (EU SDIs must be adopted to national situation)
- Common EU set of SDIs: a few indicators for all Member States in order to foster benchmarking – problem of deciding which indicators to use
- SDIs are mainly a matter of consistency, not only similarity
- Visibility: problem when there are too many indicators, more qualitative indicators are needed as well

Topic 3: SDIs as a tool to communicate SD trends and policies

Question 1:

How can SD trends and policies be communicated best?

- SDIs need to address different levels and stakeholders
- Citizens will understand indicators when they are related to their daily lives (e.g. ecological footprint)
- People like to collect data & want to measure things: could be used for SDIs
- Set of headline indicators: few indicators that measure the right thing and are reliable
- Indicators are useful for political debate and must be related to political process

Question 2:

Should SDIs be used for benchmarking SD trends in the EU-27 and what are the reasons for your view? If so, how could benchmarking work?

- Benchmarking experience shows that it is a tool that should be started for the exchange of experiences and foster learning process
- Benchmarking can be a sharp tool, but must be based on meaningful indicators
- Benchmarking is a good tool to get media attention
- Benchmarking is useful to make sure everybody is moving in the right direction
- Context and framework conditions need to be included in benchmarking exercise
- Important to apply benchmarking against different targets that should reflect the situation in Member States