

Evaluation of the Environment and Forest Regulations - 951660

Environment Regulation - 2493/2000

Abstract

The evaluation finds that this Regulation is coherent with the relevant EC policy framework and authoritative international regimes. The high degree of policy coherence provides a prerequisite for environmental mainstreaming and donor coordination. In reality mainstreaming has more to do with decision-making, planning, and allocation of resources than with practical implementation of measures at field level. Procedural restriction by the coming into force of the existing financial regulation reduces the Commission's discretion to pursue mainstreaming activities at the global level.

Purpose:

The purpose of this evaluation is to account to the legislative authority, to the relevant services of the EC and wider public for the funds expended under both Regulations in the context of overall Community development co-operation. Additionally to provide an overall independent evaluation along with proposals for the future of the Regulations, including their possible modification or termination as stipulated on articles 12 of 2494/2000 and 11 of 2493.

Methodology:

The evaluation was carried out in 3 main phases: (i) *desk* – structuring, reconstruction of the EC's strategy intervention logic behind both Regulations, development of suitable judgement criteria and indicators for the evaluation questions (EQ) proposed by the evaluation unit, selection of a sample of 35 projects in 16 countries to be visited, development of instruments for the field data collection including project assessment sheets and questionnaires; (ii) *field* – completion of data, gathering of new information and testing hypothesis; (iii) *synthesis* - analysis of data collected previously to complete the answers to the EQ and draft the conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions:

1. The Environment Regulation is coherent with the relevant EC policy framework and authoritative international regimes. The high degree of policy coherence provides an important prerequisite for environmental mainstreaming and donor coordination [findings 33, 38, 39, 42].
2. Procedural restrictions, brought about by the coming into force of the current financial regulation in 2002, reduce the Commission's discretion to pursue mainstreaming activities at the global level by way of awarding direct grants for "targeted measures". This limits considerably the Commission's room for manoeuvre in addressing newly emerging issues of the international debate, and for exploitation of promising opportunities and project ideas in a flexible manner [finding 22]. Owing to the fact that successive Strategic Orientations since 2000 focused on the thematic intersection between the Environment and Forests Regulations (e.g. with respect to conservation and sustainable management of natural resources), the thematic composition of the project portfolio blunts the Environment Regulation's comprehensive mainstreaming strategy to some extent. Urban environment, hazardous chemicals, and environmental aspects of industrial development are mostly missing in the B7-620 project portfolio. It remains to be seen whether a greater thematic balance of environmental issues can be achieved until the Regulation expires in 2006 [findings 1, 2, 8]. The financial allocation for environment, and the definition of thresholds for the minimum and maximum size of grants in the Guidelines for Applicants, further restrict effective mainstreaming [findings 3, 26].
3. For practical reasons, environmental mainstreaming has more to do with decision-making, planning, and allocation of resources than with practical implementation of (technical) measures at field level. For this reason the Environment Regulation's impact materialises more at various policy levels (national, as well as decentralised) than in respect of local livelihoods [finding 14]. Mainstreaming activities generally involve awareness raising and sensitization of various stakeholders across all levels. As such, mainstreaming by definition builds on multiplier effects, and therefore is a finite task [findings 44, 52]. However, this process is not yet complete, and justifies continued efforts, especially at the partner countries' level. For this, B7-620 provides a flexible instrument.

Recommendations:

4. **Recommendations pertaining to the wider procedural framework and the Regulation's design.** It is recommended that the Commission should ensure the continued existence of an Environment Regulation beyond 2006, with a clearer focus on mainstreaming {conclusion X, XIV}. More specifically, mainstreaming efforts should be focussed on partner countries, and BL B7-620 should remain open under the Environment Regulation for small-scale interventions in selected fields of support (e.g. information and knowledge management, participatory policy formulation, etc.).
5. To give effect to the above recommendation, the evaluators suggest that the Commission increase financial allocations {XIII}, commensurate with the Regulation's broad geographical scope and in view of many partner countries' still limited progress in mainstreaming environment-related issues. The appropriate Commission Services will need to base their lobbying for greater financial allocations on the outcome of the documentation of mainstreaming progress of B7-620 environment projects.
6. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Commission continue to maintain a broad thematic scope but drop the current requirement for balanced coverage {conclusion XII}, and in addition limit overlaps with forest-related issues {conclusion XII} in practice. In the draft Environment Regulation the significance of urban and industrial environment should be highlighted, and clear criteria for selection of sustainable natural resource management projects under the Environment Regulation should be adopted. These recommendations seek to further improve efficiency and impact of environment projects under B7-620.
7. **Recommendations pertaining to Budget-Line administration.** In the evaluators' view the Commission should closely follow up on mainstreaming progress {conclusion XV} in order to make informed choices about the Environment Regulation's future role. To this end clear criteria and indicators should be adopted, so as to better gauge environmental mainstreaming progress at different levels. Further to mainstreaming, it is recommended that the Commission focus the CfP procedure on global and regional mainstreaming needs {conclusion XI, XII, XIV}. To complement the regional focus the Practical Guide on CfP procedures should be modified so as to make possible *ad hoc* CfP, detached from the annual programming cycle. It would then be possible to pursue strategic thematic foci at a global level more effectively. Furthermore, the evaluators consider it desirable to allow for small-scale mainstreaming interventions in the Guidelines for Applicants {conclusion XIII}, simply by dropping the minimum thresholds for project size defined in the Guidelines' previous issue.

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