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Assessing the 6th Environment Action Programme: Key findings of the independent evaluation

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Structure of the presentation

- ▶ Background and context
- ▶ Approach to the study
- ▶ Assessing the achievements of the 6EAP in relation to:
 - ▶ Climate change
 - ▶ Nature and Biodiversity
 - ▶ Environment and Health
 - ▶ Natural resources and waste
 - ▶ International
- ▶ 6EAP contribution to EU environmental governance



Background and context

- ▶ In 2010, the European Commission (DG ENV) contracted an independent study to assess the achievements of the 6EAP
 - ▶ This was prepared by a consortium in which Ecologic Institute cooperated with the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and the Central European University (CEU)
- ▶ The results of this assessment, together with the 2010 State and Outlook on the Environment Report (SOER) by the European Environment Agency, will be used as input for the Commission's own final assessment of the 6EAP. This is expected to be presented in mid-2011



Our approach to the study

- ▶ **Objective:** In-depth assessment of achievements of 6EAP (2002-2010)
- ▶ **Focus:** Added value of 6EAP and role in leveraging the adoption of EU policies affecting the environment
- ▶ **Basis:** Desk research and stakeholder consultations
- ▶ **Guiding framework:**
 - ▶ Assess progress relative to the objectives set out in the 6EAP
 - ▶ Role and function of an EAP
 - ▶ Changes in underlying context and opportunity structures



Climate change: Aims and key objectives set out in the 6EAP

- ▶ Maximum global temperature increase of **2°C**
- ▶ Ratification and entry into force of **Kyoto Protocol** by 2002
- ▶ Fulfil commitment of **8% reduction in emissions** by 2008-2012
- ▶ **Credible international position** to promote agreement on more stringent reduction targets for second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol



Climate change: Progress made and role of the 6EAP

Drivers

- + International commitments and ambitions
- + Shifting political priorities
- + Link with economic agenda
- + Public opinion
- + Scientific and technological advances

Number of objectives
set out in 6EAP will be met,
however formidable
challenges remain

Role of the 6EAP:

- Reflected status quo and has not been a major driver in this area
- Overtaken by subsequent developments which could not have been foreseen
- + Reaffirmed path for EU action and strengthened it through broader institutional support

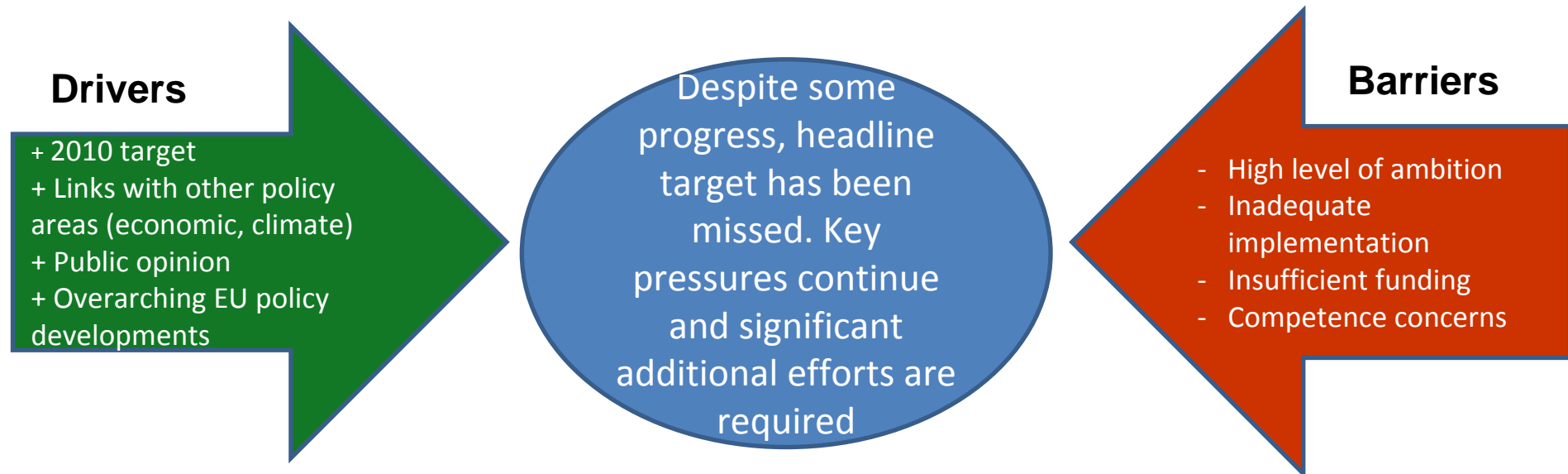


Nature and Biodiversity: Key objectives set out in the 6EAP

- ▶ Halting biodiversity decline by 2010
- ▶ Protection and appropriate restoration of nature and biodiversity from **damaging pollution**
- ▶ Conservation, appropriate restoration and sustainable use of the **marine environment**, coasts and wetlands
- ▶ Conservation of species and habitats with special concern to preventing **habitat fragmentation**
- ▶ Promote **sustainable use of the soil**



Nature and Biodiversity: Progress made and role of the 6EAP



Role of the 6EAP:

- + Map out existing commitments and reiterate 2010 target
- + Thematic Strategy processes and action in new areas
- + Promote integration considerations
- Did not address key challenges in the area



Environment and Health: Aims and key objectives set out in the 6EAP

- ▶ By 2020, to only produce and use **chemicals** in ways that do not lead to a significant negative impact on health and the environment
- ▶ More sustainable use of **pesticides** and significant overall reduction in risks and use of pesticides
- ▶ Achieving quality levels of **ground and surface water** that do not give rise to significant impacts on and risks to health and the environment
- ▶ Achieving levels of **air quality** that do not give rise to significant impacts on and risks to health and the environment
- ▶ Encouraging **sustainable urban development**



Environment and Health: Progress made and role of the 6EAP

Drivers

- + Pre-existing processes
- + Aspects of decision-making procedure

Some objectives will not be achieved (air quality, urban), while the attainment of others (chemicals, pesticides, water) depends on future implementation. Certain gaps still remain

Barriers

- Aspects of decision-making procedure
- Competence concerns
- Level of ambition

Role of the 6EAP:

- + Useful stock-taking exercise
- + Helped push forward action in certain areas
- + Helped keep certain issues on the agenda
- Failed to encourage a more coherent approach to environment and health

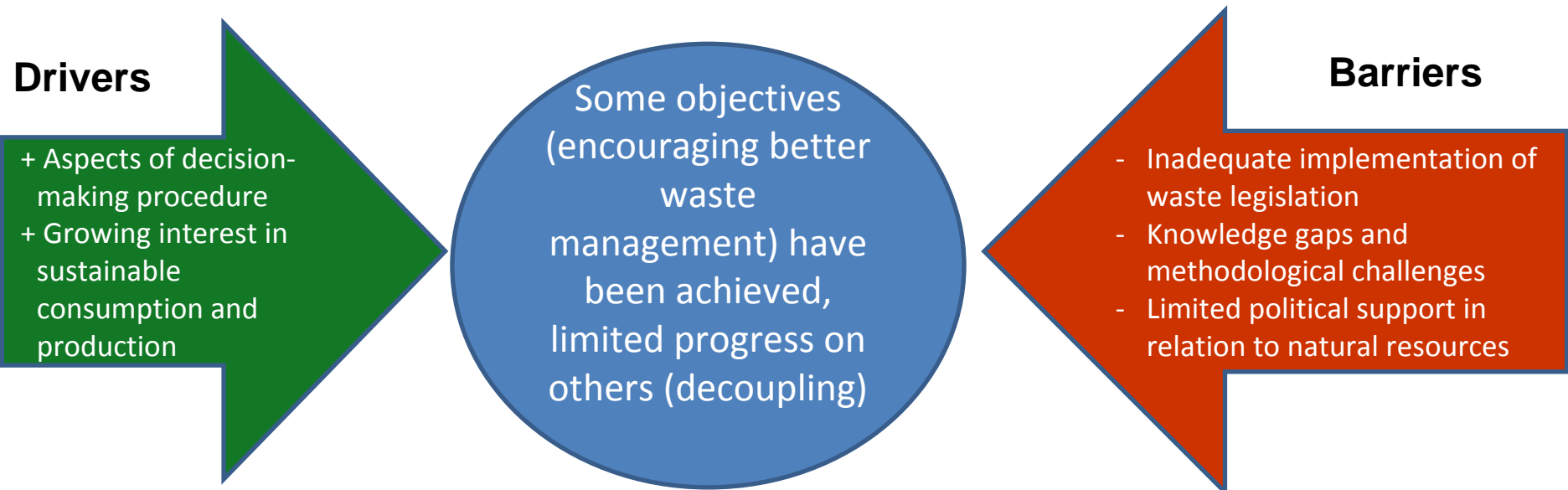


Natural resources and waste: Aims and key objectives set out in the 6EAP

- ▶ **Decoupling** the use of resources and the generation of waste from the rate of economic growth
- ▶ Ensure consumption of resources and associated impacts do not exceed **carrying capacity** of the environment
- ▶ Significant overall reduction in the **volumes of waste generated**
- ▶ Significant reduction in the **quantity of waste going to disposal** and the **volumes of hazardous waste** produced



Natural resources and waste: Progress made and role of the 6EAP



Role of the 6EAP:

- + Helped reinforce direction of policy on waste management
- + Strengthen link between waste and resource policy
- + Basis for Thematic Strategies, although underestimated some of the challenges in relation to natural resources



International dimension: Aims and key objectives set out in the 6EAP

- ▶ Stimulate the **positive and constructive role of the EU** as a leading partner in the protection of the global environment
- ▶ **Integrate** environmental concerns and objectives into all aspects of the Community's external relations
- ▶ Pursue **ambitious environmental policies at the international level**



International dimension: Progress made and role of the 6EAP



Role of the 6EAP:

- Not a major driving factor in this area, most objectives were already integrated in the EU's environmental / external policy framework
- + Reiterated commitments and acted as a further justifying factor for action



Overall messages from the thematic areas

- ▶ The 6EAP covered a **wide range of issues** and provided a useful stock-taking exercise of existing and planned measures
- ▶ Progress has varied across the different thematic areas partly due to:
 - ▶ **Internal factors** (varying level of ambition);
 - ▶ **External drivers** and **opportunity structures** which developed over time
- ▶ The **role of the 6EAP** itself has also differed between the thematic areas
- ▶ Keep in mind the role and function of an EAP, be realistic and concrete in expectations



Environmental governance

- ▶ Improving EU environmental governance is an important 6EAP priority:
 - ▶ In Articles 3 (strategic approaches) and 10 (environmental policy making), but also in other places, Art. 4 (Thematic Strategies) and 2 (principles and aims).
- ▶ Besides objective 6EAP effects on governance, the assessment also focuses on subjective aspects, i.e. how actors perceive the role of the 6EAP and its added value.
 - ▶ Based on the results of the stakeholder consultation.
- ▶ Relevant governance effects:
 - ▶ Orientation and managing expectations, legitimacy, input and participation, policy instruments, coherence, priority setting, sustaining and advancing environmental protection.



Orientation and managing expectations: Providing a sense of direction

- ▶ 6EAP provided actors with a better understanding of EU environmental policy and helped them to form expectations of its future direction and agenda. Key 6EAP aspects:
 - ▶ Four environmental priority areas;
 - ▶ Bringing together existing plans and commitments across different environmental issues;
 - ▶ Policy-making approaches and instruments, in particular the Thematic Strategies.
- ▶ 6EAP performance suffered from a lack of transparency and has not been communicated very well.



Legitimacy: Increasing acceptance

- ▶ Significant positive 6EAP contribution to legitimacy of EU environmental policy:
 - ▶ Legal-procedural perspective:
 - ▶ Adoption through co-decision procedure which involved the democratically elected European Parliament.
 - ▶ Perceived (empirical) legitimacy:
 - ▶ Adoption through co-decision procedure;
 - ▶ Continuation of long tradition of EU environment action programmes;
 - ▶ Perceived relatively strong impact of 6EAP on performance and predictability of EU environmental policy.
- ▶ Stakeholder statements suggest that the legitimacy of the 6EAP helped to defend a key element of the Programme - the Thematic Strategies - in the face of strong political opposition at times.



Participation: Mobilising input and support

- ▶ 6EAP strongly emphasises the role of participation and best available scientific input, but its direct contribution to the adoption of respective legislation was small.
 - ▶ Other factors, such as implementation of the Aarhus Convention, the EU SDS and the Better Regulation initiative were more significant.
- ▶ The Thematic Strategy approach arguably provided the 6EAP's most important contribution to stakeholder participation and improved scientific input.
- ▶ The process of formulating the 6EAP through the co-decision procedure also
 - ▶ enabled direct contributions by Member State officials and the European Parliament;
 - ▶ provided additional or alternative channels of information and influence for external stakeholders.



Instruments: Translating objectives into outcomes

- ▶ 6EAP refers to an extensive range of policy-making approaches and instruments. However, it only establishes an implicit, rudimentary hierarchy among them.
- ▶ **Notable exception:** 6EAP codified the **Thematic Strategy** approach and led to its broader application. The Thematic Strategies in turn exerted influence on the choice of instruments:
 - ▶ Creating/reinforcing European networks of policy-makers, stakeholders and experts;
 - ▶ Adoption of legislation, in particular relatively broad and flexible framework directives.



Priority setting: Increasing effectiveness

- ▶ Mixed 6EAP performance as some priorities were more influential/effective than others:
 - ▶ The **four environmental thematic areas** are widely seen as appropriate.
 - ▶ However, operational programming occurred through more specific processes and was affected by different opportunity structures which influenced the balance between the four thematic areas in actual policy-making.
 - ▶ **Thematic Strategies** functioned as a *de facto* layer of effective priority setting.
 - ▶ Most 6EAP **priority actions** had little impact on effective priority setting in practice.
 - ▶ They were often either too vague or conditioned by processes pre-dating the 6EAP.



Coherence: Improving policy integration

- ▶ Thematic Strategies and associated measures contributed to coherence **within 6EAP priority areas**:
 - ▶ Closed important gaps and revised existing measures;
 - ▶ However, scope often too narrow to increase overall internal coherence within priority areas.
- ▶ Some positive effects on the **integration of environmental requirements in non-environmental sectors**:
 - ▶ Significant influence on environmental dimension of the **EU Sustainable Development Strategy**;
 - ▶ Support for environmental policy integration in **negotiations within the Commission**;
 - ▶ Served as an important **point of reference** for non-environmental actors and agencies.
- ▶ 6EAP did not sufficiently recognise links **between its four thematic areas**.
- ▶ Paid little attention to **comprehensive, cross-sectoral policy integration** (in particular coherence between economic and environmental policies).
- ▶ Made only a small contribution to improving coherence between the EU's **internal and external policies**.



Effects on politics and policy: Sustaining and advancing environmental protection

- ▶ Faced with changing political priorities and external developments, 6EAP made a significant contribution to **keeping environmental requirements on the EU agenda**:
 - ▶ Thematic Strategies helped to keep environmental protection requirements on the agenda despite strong opposition at times;
 - ▶ Relatively strong 'defensive' impact in the waste sector and in certain areas relating to biodiversity.
- ▶ **Thematic Strategies** contributed to advancing EU environmental policy:
 - ▶ Extended the EU environmental agenda to areas in which the EU had previously not been very active;
 - ▶ Improved co-ordination, updated existing measures, and closed some gaps.
- ▶ Despite 2007 mid-term review, **effectiveness of the 6EAP declined** following adoption of Thematic Strategies.



Conclusions

- ▶ 6EAP had an **added value** for EU environmental policy. This added value was more significant with respect to EU environmental governance and subjective factors than in terms of leveraging the adoption of EU measures and objective factors:
 - ▶ With respect to **EU environmental governance**, the 6EAP:
 - ▶ Provided a strategic framework and important point of reference for policy-makers and stakeholders, contributing to a better understanding of EU environmental policy and its future direction and agenda;
 - ▶ Increased the legitimacy of EU environmental policy;
 - ▶ Contributed to other aspects of EU environmental governance, mainly through the Thematic Strategies and associated measures.
 - ▶ The 6EAP's **leverage capacity** was moderate and declined significantly during the second half of the 6EAP:
 - ▶ Strong impact on adoption of key priority actions, mainly Thematic Strategies and associated measures. However, with the majority of less prominent, but more numerous priority actions the leverage capacity was small or not identifiable;
 - ▶ Contributions of Thematic Strategies to achieving the main 6EAP environmental objectives before the 6EAP expires are moderate.
 - ▶ Moderate leverage performance should be seen in the **context of a challenging environment** where factors such as the effects of globalisation and the financial and economic crisis often have a strong impact on EU environmental measures.
 - ▶ Need to be realistic as to what a programme such as the 6EAP can achieve.



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Thank you

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