TOOL #16. HOW TO SET OBJECTIVES

1. INTRODUCTION

Objectives link the analysis of the problem (and its drivers) to the options for the policy response. They set the level of policy ambition, fix the yardsticks for comparing policy options and determine the criteria for monitoring and evaluating the achievements of implemented policy.[137]

Objectives can be set at different levels and at different times.

Objectives setting	
After the analysis of the problem	
General	These are the Treaty-based goals which the policy aims to contribute to.
Specific	These set out concretely what the policy intervention is meant to achieve. They should be broad enough to allow consideration of all relevant policy alternatives without prejudging a particular solution i.e. the specific objectives are part of the intervention logic: problem-drivers-specific objectives-policy options.
After identifying the preferred option (and when completing the monitoring and evaluation section)	
Operational	These are defined in terms of the deliverables of specific policy actions. As such, they are **typically option-specific**. These should not, therefore, be reported in the same place in the IA report[138] as the general and specific objectives but reported in the section referring to the preferred policy option and in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

While general, specific and operational objectives will generally be needed for a legislative initiative, only general and specific objectives will be needed for a communication setting out broad policy objectives. Whereas for implementing legislation, there will be no need to set out general objectives which will have been discussed in the context of the basic act.

2. S.M.A.R.T. OBJECTIVES

Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (i.e. **'S.M.A.R.T'**).

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[137] See Tool #41 on *Monitoring arrangements and indicators*; and Tool #42 on *Legal provisions on monitoring and evaluation*.

[138] See Tool #12 on *The format of the IA report*.

What are S.M.A.R.T. objectives?	
Specific	Objectives should be precise and concrete enough not to be open to varying interpretations by different people.
Measurable	Objectives should define a desired future state in measurable terms, to allow verification of their achievement. Such objectives are either quantified or based on a combination of description and scoring scales.
Achievable	Policy aims should be set at a level which is ambitious but at the same time realistically achievable.
Relevant	The objectives should be directly linked to the problem and its root causes.
Time-Bound	Objectives should be related to a fixed date or precise time period to allow an evaluation of their achievement.

When objectives are multiple and interrelated, it is important to highlight the links between them, particularly any possible trade-offs. When problems are complex and have many underlying drivers, numerous objectives are often identified, be they general, specific or operational. In these cases, an "objectives tree" can be used to depict graphically the relations among different goals[139].

Example of a hierarchy of policy objectives

GENERAL	SPECIFIC	OPERATIONAL
Better protect the health and safety of users of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Ensure high quality of products protecting against high risks including a high quality of their production process Ensure the reliability and high quality of conformity assessment activities carried out by notified bodies Ensure traceability of products	Remove inconsistencies in the list of products subject to the most stringent conformity assessment procedure Specify common criteria for the assessment, monitoring and control of Notified Bodies to be applied equally throughout the EU.
Create a level playing field for PPE economic operators	Ensure consistency of conformity assessment services carried out by notified bodies Improve market surveillance mechanisms and tools	Clarify the requirements for EC type-examination certificates Simplify and clarify the requirements for the technical file Require the EC Declaration of conformity to accompany every product
Simplify the European regulatory environment in the field of PPE	Ensure consistent application of the legislation Ensure the requirements are practicable	Clarify the scope of the Directive Simplify the applicable conformity assessment procedures Clarify the requirements set out in ANNEX II

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[139] See Tool #65 on *How to use visual aids and present quantitative information.*