Soils for Europe

PROJECT IMPACT ON POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

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9. MS introducing evidence-based policy changes aiming to improve soil health

QUANTITATIVE



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INTRODUCTION

SOLO introduces a comprehensive impact assessment framework designed to evaluate the real-world effects of Mission Soil research and innovation activities across society, the economy, policy, and practice. This adaptable tool supports Mission Soil projects in monitoring and evaluation, with future potential for ex-ante assessment and project design. Beyond defining key components, qualitative indicators, quantitative metrics, and impact narratives, SOLO also outlines the mechanisms needed to effectively implement the framework in practice.

The assessment framework allows for the evaluation of 5 types of impact of Mission Soil Research and Innovation (R&I) activities:

1. **Project impact in practice**: focus on impact among land managers, advisors, urban planners and other stakeholders;
2. **Project impact on policy and administration**: focus on policy strategies and tools, and other institutional arrangements;
3. **Project impact on value chain organisation and practices**: focus on market mechanisms, business models and requirements;
4. **Broader societal impact**: focus on literacy, awareness, school programmes and education;
5. **Impact on research and innovation:** focus on academic institutions, researchers, publications and funding.

These 5 types of impact correspond to categories under which key performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, are grouped.



The other component of the impact assessment framework is the **impact narrative**: a compelling, substantiated statement which reflects the contributions of R&I activities to society, the economy, policy and practice beyond numbers and quantitative targets.

An **impact narrative** must describe the societal challenge to be tackled; identify the stakeholders and beneficiaries who are positively impacted, explaining how they have experienced meaningful change; describe the situation at the start of the project vis-a-vis the goal of the assessment; describe the specific outcomes and results of the R&I activities; describe changes in behaviour, practices and policies; include real-world examples and stories; be supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence; connect the impact to broader societal goals; and provide insights into the potential future implications and opportunities resulting from the developed R&I.

MS introducing evidence-based policy changes aiming to improve soil health

DESCRIPTION AND IMPORTANCE

Assessment of the Mission Soil's impact on Member States' policies and regulations, including the provision of scientific outputs and outcomes introduced into policy making.

For the purposes of this indicator, the introduction of policy changes to improve soil health must be traceable to Mission Soil, both directly (e.g., scientific evidence comes directly from Mission Soil funded projects) or indirectly (e.g., scientific initiatives that have gained from the Mission Soil activities).

To evaluate whether policy changes are traceable to the Mission Soil, it is recommended to apply the Process Tracing methodology. This monitoring and evaluation methodology has the purpose of establishing how a cause influenced a specific change (INTRAC, 2017). Although there are specific tests that may be applied to the existing evidence which links potential causes to the change ("Straw in the wind", "Hoop", "Smoking gun", "Doubly Decisive"), the methodology may be summarised in 5 analytical steps (INTRAC, 2017):

- Step 1: Identify the change or changes to be explained
- Step 2: Establish the evidence for the change
- Step 3: Document the processes leading to the change
- Step 4: Establish alternative causal explanations
- Step 5: Assess the evidence for each causal explanation

Traceability to Mission Soil also ensures that policy changes are evidence-based. The concept of evidence-based policy is drawn from the OECD's definition of evidence-informed policy-making: "a process whereby multiple sources of information, including statistics, data and including the best available research evidence and evaluations, are consulted before making a decision to plan, implement, and (where relevant) alter public policies, programmes and deliver quality public other services" (OECD, 2020a) 12). For the purposes of this indicator, the only types of public policy instruments to be considered are regulations and legislation.

DEFINITION

Number of MS introducing evidence-based soil health-related legislation or specific regulations in their regulatory bodies, including specific legislation on soil related topics (direct or indirect) with demonstrable use of scientific evidence.

MEASUREMENT

This indicator measures the number of Member States that have introduced or are in the process of introducing soil health-related legislation or specific regulations in their regulatory bodies, which are evidence-based. Only policy changes which are traceable (directly or indirectly) to Mission Soil are considered.

OPTION 1

To ascertain whether policy changes are to be considered for this KPI, an analysis should be conducted to evaluate if those policies i) are traceable to the Mission Soil (see Description and Importance), and ii) abide by the principles and standards for the good governance of evidence (OECD, 2020b).

The OECD (OECD, 2020b) recommends the following principles and standards for the good governance of evidence in the context of policy design, implementation and evaluation:

- Principles:
  - Appropriate evidence for the policy concern
  - Ensuring integrity (honest brokerage)
  - Accountability
  - Contestability
  - Public representation in decision-making
  - Transparency in the use of evidence
  - Building evidence through emerging technologies and mobilising data
- Standards:
  - Standards concerning evidence synthesis
  - Theory of change and logic underpinning an intervention
  - Design and development of policies and programmes
  - Efficacy of an intervention
  - Effectiveness of interventions
  - Cost effectiveness of interventions
  - Implementation and scale up of interventions

OPTION 2

To ascertain whether policy changes are to be considered for this KPI, an analysis should be conducted to evaluate if those policies i) are traceable to the Mission Soil (see Description and Importance), and ii) present a set of core characteristics of evidence-based policy instruments (OECD, 2020a).

The OECD (OECD, 2020a) mentions the following aspects as being characteristically present in evidence-based policy instruments:

- "Policy memory"
- Evidence synthesis (systematic reviews)



- Implementation science and evidence on factors that help and hinder implementation
- Policy evaluation system and its strategic use
- RIA
- Transparency

COMMON TO BOTH OPTIONS

In order to provide additional information, the indicator disaggregates by:

- Number and type of policy instruments:
  - Taxes and fees
  - Environmentally beneficial subsidies and payments
  - Tradable permits and offsets
  - Deposit-refund schemes
  - Voluntary approaches
- Geographic scope:
  - Local / city
  - State / Provincial
  - National / Federal
  - Supranational / International
  - Other
- Impacted economic sector:
  - Laws without direct impact
  - Agriculture, forestry, livestock, fishing and food system
  - Real estate / Properties binding
  - Mining and quarrying
  - Waste
  - Energy
  - Industry and manufacturing
  - Transport
  - Tourism
  - Public sector
- Status:
  - Planned
  - Adopted (approved as a directive or a parliamentary decision)
  - Effective



The survey results from the adaptation of measurement methodologies for indicators on environmental policy instruments (OECD, EEA, UN).

LEVEL

MS

DATA SOURCE

MS reporting; Consulting; Project reporting

PERIODICITY

Quadrennial

TYPE

Impact

CLASS

Enabling conditions

REFERENCES

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