Evaluation for better regulation in environment and climate policies –
Lessons from research and practice

Lead questions for thematic clusters

1) (state of play) Which are the key elements necessary for an evaluation supporting better regulation in environment and climate policy?

2) (obstacles) What are the key analytical and take-up obstacles for environmental evaluation in the context of "better regulation"?

3) (improvements) What are opportunities and priority areas for developing evaluation in the current political context?

Feedback from session natural systems track climate change adaptation (1)

1) (state of play)
   - New international policies and goals (climate change; disaster risk, sustainable development)
   - EU adaptation strategy evaluation due 2017/2018.
   - Many national strategies; some implementation; monitoring/evaluation just started.
   - National level: mixed methods of qualitative information and indicator sets is good basis; re-use existing data; limited evidence of revision of adaptation policies after evaluation.
   - Urban level: many cities started adaptation strategies and actions (e.g. Covenant of Mayors), no full overview available, evaluation is new.

2) (obstacles)
   - Global and EU level: limited comparability across countries (national communications to UNFCCC and EU MMR reporting 2015)
   - National level: unclear aims and objectives of evaluation; lack of clearly defined adaptation policy objectives
   - Broad participation of other stakeholders often lacking other than e.g. ministerial working group.
   - Methods are mainly process oriented; less on improvements in vulnerabilities and resilience; very difficult to measure (uncertainty, long timeframes, attribution to policy action, costs of inaction).

Feedback from session natural systems track climate change adaptation (2)

3) (improvements)

Conceptual framework:

- Clarity on objectives: learning; accountability; improving policies; awareness; reporting requirements.
- Align with other, sectoral, policies and their evaluations and review cycles.
- Consider evaluation perspective already when developing policies.
- Adaptive management is key, bringing in ways to handle 'surprises'

Governance, ownership and participation

- Enhance learning across multiple levels of governance (mechanisms needed)
- Improve engagement of stakeholders (citizens, NGOs, businesses) through 'communities of practice'.

Data and methods

- Continuous monitoring, tracking of intervention logic and development of knowledge base.
- Decentralise and appoint knowledge brokers; core group and organise external checks.

Utilise results and flexibility

- Involving intended users in evaluation design from start; include in plans how/when learning can lead to revised plans; make results publicly and easy accessible.

New approaches needed ?

- Consider inspiring 'transformative' examples. E.g. at urban scale city of Copenhagen, cloudburst actions (green, blue) that drive urban development (nature, bicycling etc). Dutch Delta Program, designed as learning arrangement.
- Use of big data ?

Feedback from session natural systems track
Natural capital, water

1) (state of play)
- Natural capital: knowledge base for ecosystem accounts is developing; land and water accounts most advanced.
- Water: large knowledge base; 2nd river basin management plans and 1st flood risk management plans reported to EC March 2016. EC assessment due end 2016, basis for future WFD review; WFD review to complete latest 2019. Timing is mid of the second 6-year cycle (third ending 2027)

2) (obstacles)
- Natural capital: ecosystem accounts are data intensive.
- Water: not all plans have been adopted and submitted yet; implementation of WFD is slow.

3) (improvements)
- Natural capital: develop system further; prioritise use in evaluation; e.g. how well is natural capital integrated into other policies (example: agricultural policies).
- Water: good opportunity to consider evaluation objectives beyond the current foreseen in WFD. Address big issues:
  - Are major societal needs covered (WFD covers mainly env objectives)?
  - Why is implementation (measures) slow?
  - Role of agricultural and other sectors?
  - Which parts of the WFD/acquis will be evaluated?
  - EU level competence versus national, what is shared?
  - What could be the use of the evaluation (change WFD or more)?
  - Involve other stakeholders than MS.