

More Coherent Monitoring for Management Decisions Using Intermediate Level Indicators

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Goals of monitoring

Proper monitoring makes its users aware of the state of the considered processes. This implies a good understanding of the process and of its interactions with observed developments. Most policy areas are influenced by a package of interacting policy measures and actions from various stakeholders. Effective management and policy decisions therefore need information at appropriate levels that enable decision makers to appreciate the context and the relations between measures and actions. Over the past years, the Netherlands, has experimented with a three level approach in monitoring that enables timely decision making. It provides information on:

- The developments with respect to overall national policy targets
- The major developments in specific priority policy areas
- The progress in planned (policy related) activities and programs.

This approach is being used for coordination and management purposes, but has in recent years also (together with ECN) been used for reporting to Parliament.

Statistics and dynamics

Most monitoring and evaluation depend on statistics that often are available only after considerable time. Though these will remain crucial for accounting and ex-post reporting and evaluation, for direct policy coordination and management these are usually too late. For such purposes, trend information may suffice, if provided more timely and on an appropriate level.

In the Dutch system, the second of the aforementioned three levels, aims to provide such information, i.e. relevant trends in specific priority areas in policy. These areas do constitute the main points of 'attack' for policy measures, a common level on which policy measures are being developed. In built environment e.g. the area of '*existing housing*' is such an area for which the government may want to achieve energy efficiency improvements through a package of interacting measures, e.g. new legislation on labeling, covenants on energy efficient housing and financial incentives for specific energy efficiency systems. Indicators at such intermediate levels (e.g. the number of houses with energy saving measures) may show the trends and dynamic in this policy area and support timely management decisions. Such information may also support timely communication on outcomes and actions with stakeholders.

Top-down, bottom-up or intermediate indicators

Intermediate level indicators combine top-down information with more timely available data on major trends. They do not replace macro-statistics but take an advance look at major developments to facilitate timely (corrective) management actions. They look at the developments in the target area and the related package as a whole and (in a qualitative way) at the role of the various policy measures herein. This enables a first assessment of the role of the policies in the package. Evaluation of individual measures may be added later, if needed; this may possibly be less frequent and more focused on their role within the package.