

Assessing the Status of Biodiversity Politics and Biodiversity Policy Perceptions at the Federal Government Level in Germany – Implications for applying Policy Instruments

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How a policy field is regarded and dealt with by its practitioners is an important question when considering the issue of applied and preferred policy instruments. A new study undertaken by the Leuphana University and WWF Germany is addressing exactly this question with relation to the field of Biodiversity. The study focuses on biodiversity politics and its integration in Germany's political process on federal level in order to determine to what extent biodiversity is institutionalized in politics as its own topic.

The topic of biodiversity – which includes the variety of species, ecosystems, and genetics – is becoming a more prominent as well as a more pressing problem in political science and for political and administrative stakeholders. Therefore, it is of vital importance to review the status of biodiversity policies in the political and administrative processes and to offer analyses and solutions to their governance challenges. One of these governance challenges is finding a configuration of policy instruments that would best serve achieving the goal of preventing biodiversity loss. Biodiversity can also illustrate how a state and its actors (e.g. agencies, ministries) concretely handle sustainability politics because all sustainability dimensions (ecological, economic and social) are affected when it comes to biodiversity.

To take a fresh look at biodiversity politics and to gain a better understanding of the level of recognition, implementation and significance of biodiversity politics as a distinct political realm, the study reviews almost every federal ministry as well as the political parties in the German parliament (2009-2013) by conducting in-depth interviews with practitioners, such as members of Parliament, undersecretaries, heads of divisions and subdivisions to referents, and analyzing official documents. The main focus lies on how institutionalized biodiversity is in Germany's federal political and administrative landscape and if there is a strategic perspective for its implementation in the political process. Closely connected to this and of equal importance, is a detailed examination of which policy instruments are used and preferred by various institutions. Reviewing different actors' preferences is expected to reveal their political viewpoints and perceptions on how to best shape the political agenda. Additionally, by taking into account their respective roles in the political-administrative process and power to influence the political agenda, it may be possible to gain a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of effective biodiversity policies. Recognizing the importance of biodiversity to the survival of all species, any opportunities and constraints to

integrate biodiversity in all activities of respective sectors of politics and public administration are also identified. Conclusions and recommendations are developed to address more effective biodiversity policy implementation in future.

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