

Discussion session:

Data challenges in evaluations: The case of consumption and waste



Experience drawn from the evaluation Waste statistics for a better environment

You can find the report *Waste statistics for att better environment. An evaluation of data supply for waste statistics. Report 6536, December 2012*, see link below

<http://www.naturvardsverket.se/Om-Naturvardsverket/Publikationer/ISBN/6500/978-91-620-6536-2/>

What is waste?

“any substance or object which
the holder discards or intends
or is required to discard”

Some facts on waste in the EU

- As European society has grown wealthier it has created more and more rubbish. Each year in the European Union alone we throw away 3 billion tonnes of waste - some 90 million tonnes of it hazardous.
- By 2020, the OECD estimates, we could be generating 45% more waste than we did in 1995.
- A lot of emphasis must be put on decreasing our waste.
- To be able to do that – we need goals and monitoring.

Waste management in the EU

- The European Union's approach to waste management is based on three principles:
- **Waste prevention**
- **Recycling and re-use**
- **Improving final disposal and monitoring**

EU's waste hierarchy



Importance of monitoring

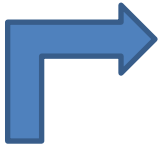
- Monitoring allows you to make a transparent and objective evaluation of whether the project has been a success or not.
- You need reliable data that are stable over time.
- **If you don't measure it, you can't manage it!**

Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and waste statistics

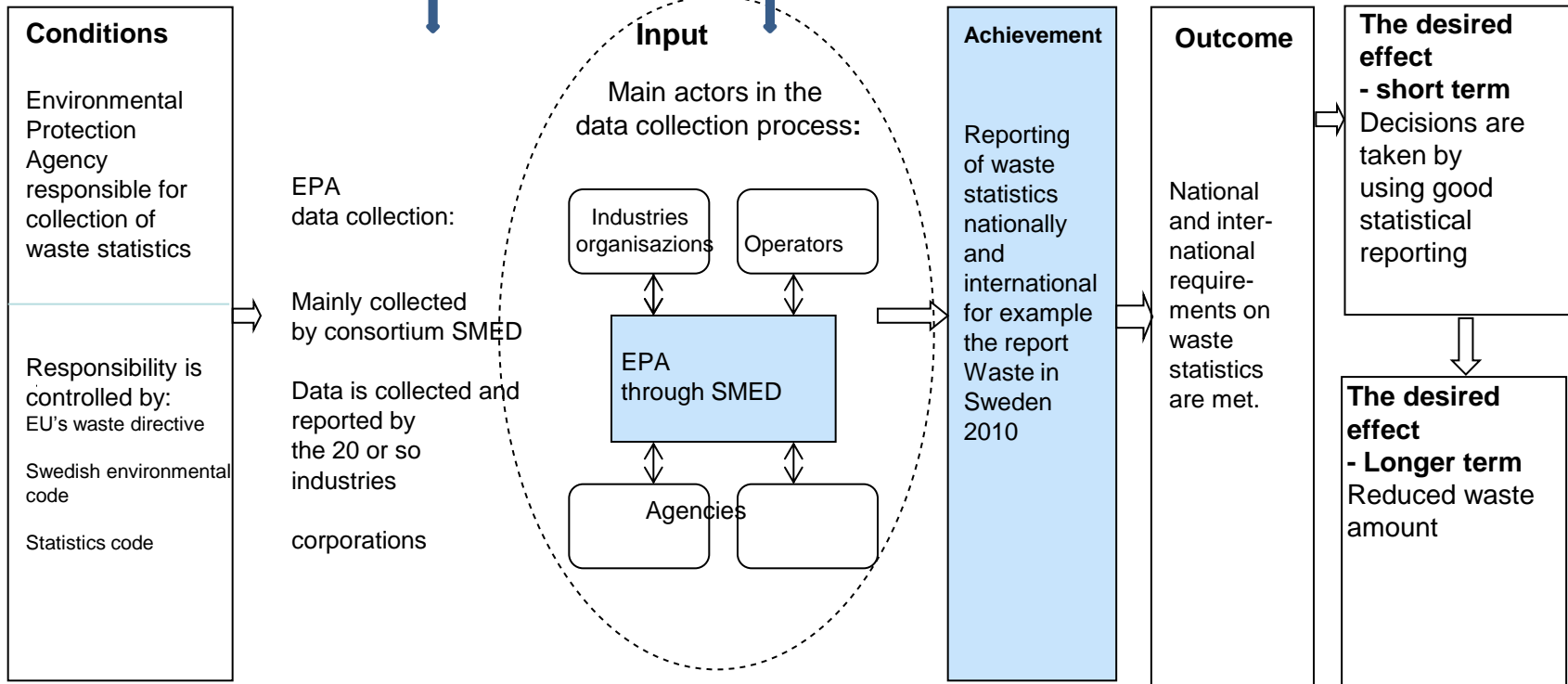
- The Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for compiling statistics in the area of waste disposal. These are used mainly for monitoring the national environmental goals in the area, as well as reporting on Swedish conditions to the EU and international organizations.
- There are extensive underlying documented data for waste statistics, compiled by many different entities and subject to a great deal of uncertainty.
- Compiling data is costly.

Method of the evaluation

- This evaluation elucidates the current methods and conditions for producing waste statistics, and evaluates whether the compilation of statistical information about waste is being done in an efficient manner within the constraints of prioritizations, resources and norms.
- The results of the evaluation are based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives of industry organizations, recycling companies, governmental agencies and researchers who all work with waste or wastestatistics.



- Different methodologies over time in collecting statistics
- Changes in definitions and interpretations
- Changes in the needs and requirements
- Inadequate documentation in many industries



Regulation's requirements - high work load at a high cost

- The EU Waste Directive and Waste Statistics Regulation have given rise to a more comprehensive approach to Swedish waste statistics.
- The reporting requirements for waste categories do not match domestic requirements and prioritizations in all respects.
- The Environmental Protection Agency initially placed a great deal of weight on compliance with the Regulation's reporting requirements too a high work load an high cost.

Important to explain that all data do not reach all requirements

- In recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency has devoted more resources to producing statistics that support the monitoring of the national environmental goals.
- The evaluation shows examples in which the dialogue and communication between the Environmental Protection Agency and actors in the waste industry could have been clearer and more consensus-based.
- This can be explained by the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency most likely did not communicate clearly enough the purpose behind the waste statistics, which was primarily to comply with the requirements of the EU Directive, and explain that the data on which the reporting is based most often is not adequate for current national and regional monitoring or supervision.

More resources and a national register can improve understanding and quality of data

- Another explanation is that deficiencies in the internal operations of the Environmental Protection Agency impacted negatively on communication with outside parties.
- Other measures suggested related to an improved dialogue with the business community, changes in regulations regarding environmental reporting by those operating businesses or other activities, or increasing producer liability requirements.
- The proposals by the interviewees regarding improvements in the compilation of statistics primarily concern the establishment of a national waste registry along the lines of the Norwegian and Danish models. However, it is not clear who would be compiling, maintaining and paying for this.

Increased understanding through clearer communication

- This evaluation has shown that it would be of benefit to the Environmental Protection Agency to develop forms of co-ordination in order to achieve more of a consensus, and increased understanding regarding the Agency's role.
- The evaluation therefore finds that the Environmental Protection Agency should agree to place greater emphasis on the opportunities and challenges of both internal and external communication.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's grounds for prioritization of the continued work involving waste statistics should be broadly supported and sustainable over the long term. More in-depth evaluation can be a strategic tool that can serve as a basis for prioritization in efforts with waste statistics.

Thoughts on priorities of waste statistics

- Monitoring is tricky – definitions of waste residues sometimes change – difficult to find baseline.
- You can't measure everything – prioritize statistics that is the most valuable for environmental goals.
- It is always a question of priorities between quality and cost – selections of data are often the best method rather than total surveys.
- If it's possible – collection by the sectors themselves locally is preferable for better accuracy.

More thoughts on waste statistics

- An EU directive that puts a great demand on monitoring can be a really good thing.
- But it is not always that the demand is consistent with the national goals or priorities.
- Important to be active in negotiations within EU collaboration.

Discussions

- (1) What are the challenges when it comes to data related to consumption and waste?
- (2) Are there other experiences from other places - the same or the opposite experiences?
- (3) How were these challenges managed?
- (4) *What might be the consequences depending on how the challenges are managed – positive or negative?*

Organization of discussion:

- Small groups for the first 3 questions, in 15 minutes, each group writes down their main conclusions.
- The last question will be discussed among all participants in the session, 10 minutes.