Uptake of research in policy and practice: a consultation in the water sector

Introduction

Gaps have been identified between research, policy and practice at each stage of designing, conducting and communicating research to policy makers and practitioners, which mean that the use of research can be limited. The SPLASH ERA-Net seeks to address the problem of utilizing the results of research in the formulation of policy by exchanging experiences of this issue between EU Member States and developing countries.

The purpose

SPLASH conducted an e-conference with the aim of exploring the linkages between research findings and the development of water sector policy. To achieve this aim, the e-conference set out to find out about where research has been successfully (and less successfully) incorporated into sector policy, and of investigating any mechanisms which assist the process of incorporation. This fact sheet presents elements of good and bad practice and raises questions to improve the accessibility of research findings.

Headline facts

- Research findings have been successfully applied in policy development, with good examples of the identification, planning and implementation of research for policy development.
- A number of barriers, pre-requisites and tools relating to the uptake of research findings into policy development have also been identified e.g. sufficient investment, a 'collaboration culture', and the lead times for change.
- While there are some examples of successful application of research findings into policy development and the links between the identification, planning and implementation of research for policy development, there is still a sense that much more needs to be known about how this might work and what is required to do this effectively. In addition, there is a clear need for a deeper and broader level of understanding at the national level of the processes involved in policy making and strategy development by the two distinct groups identified in the e-conference - the research community and the policy makers.

Recommendations

The SPLASH e-conference discussions generated some important 'leads' to explore further:

- What incentives are needed to bring stakeholders together and how can barriers be overcome?
- How can the prerequisites of this interface be ensured, e.g. by increasing the impact of existing structures, improving dissemination, using participatory approaches and ICTs?
- How can the potential benefits of such a process be realized in terms of learning lessons, and monitoring and evaluating the impact of research findings on policy development?
- How can research issues of national importance and relevance be identified and incorporated into global and regional trends in policy and strategy?
- What are the processes for maintaining an awareness of the wider stage and those research findings that have already proved to be relevant at this level?

Find out more

Nutley, Sandra, Isabel Walter and Huw T.O. Davies (2007), *Using Evidence. How research can inform public services*. Policy Press, University of Bristol, UK.

Elledge, M.F , Rosensweig, F. and Warner, D.B. (2002), *Guidelines for the assessment of national sanitation policies* (EHP strategic report; no. 2). Arlington, VA, USA, EHP.

Further information

This is one of a series of SPLASH fact sheets available on the SPLASH website **www.splash-era.net**

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