The Impact of Selected Foresight Studies

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Outline

1. Measuring Impact
2. Findings on Impact
3. Types of Impact
4. How to Proceed
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1. Measuring Impact

- It is difficult to measure impact of foresight-like studies
- Main information on impact of foresight is from official reports and actors
- Most frequent use of some policy studies is to reinforce existing views (experience from TA)
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Types of Impact

• Impact due to method vs. Impact due to results
• Is method/approach selected best way to achieve desired goals?
• Have stated objectives been achieved?
• Have objectives changed or shifted during the process?
• One time impact vs. Recurring impact
• Indirect impact of the project
• Delayed impacts (vs. Immediate impacts)
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Areas of Impact:

• Science and technology (policy)
• The Innovation System (research, industry etc.)
• Society at large, e.g.
  – NGOs, consumer organisations, users
  – Press, media
  – Scientific debate
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Preliminary Findings (1):
• In some countries, there has been impact of foresight on national science and technology priorities (CR as extreme case)
• Major benefit of many recent exercises is creation of networks to increase cohesion between the science base and users/beneficiaries of science results in society and industry
• In some countries, foresight has spawned offspring, e.g. foresight by others
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Preliminary findings (ii):

- Too early to assess the validity of science related expectations, articles on Delphi underline accuracy of Delphi predictions, but Swedish „Technology Hindsight“ identifies common sources of errors
- In most countries, foresight is being continued after first exercise
- Reinforcing positions or encouraging policy makers to decide in certain way might also be impact
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What to do?

• Genuine assessment of impact only through additional information from network members
• In addition, survey (structured interview or questionnaire) among main actors in each foresight exercise required to measure impact
• The impact of recent exercises will only become visible as time progresses
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Conclusions

• Too early to assess real impact of studies and mainly biased information
• There are indications that foresight has had impact on S&T policy,
• Benefits of networking often stressed
• Some foresight has already spawned „offspring“