

Introduction

Sustainable development is an overarching policy objective in the European Union. As a response to the pressing governance and management challenges of sustainable development, the MATISSE ('Methods and Tools for Integrated Sustainability Assessment') project, funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme, proposed to achieve a step-wise advance in the science and application of Integrated Sustainability Assessment (ISA). ISA is an innovative way of assessing sustainable development based on a new mode of knowledge development. Certainly ISA capacity-building is a long-term venture and there is much still to do, but the MATISSE project signals that work on a new generation of assessments with a specific orientation on sustainability and transition is underway.

MATISSE aimed to contribute to sustainability-oriented governance by providing innovative methods, tools and process-architecture for conducting Integrated Sustainability Assessments (ISA). The three-year project with 22 partners from institutes in 11 European countries (see page 48) started in April 2005. The project addressed the use of sustainability assessment in the European context, but the results are relevant generally to questions concerning the role that assessment might play in supporting sustainability-oriented governance and in the analysis of potential sustainability 'transitions'. The approach taken to learning within the project may also hold wider implications for other projects in the emerging

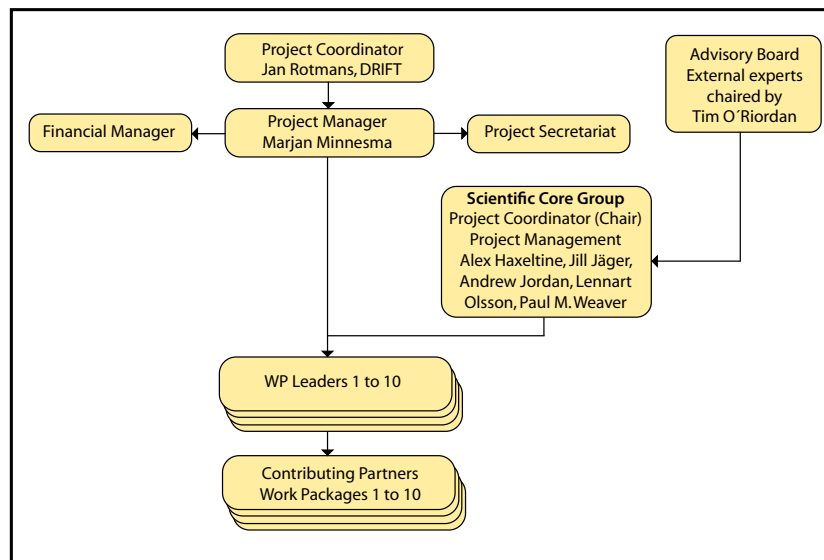
field of science in support of sustainable development.

Fundamentally, MATISSE was a project with a mandate to be innovative methodologically; it sought to begin work on new approaches and tools for ISA that are capable of exploring transition pathways. This is an ambitious endeavour that will continue long after this project.

The main activities within MATISSE were:

- the development of a common conceptual framework for ISA
- the delivery of a portfolio of tools for ISA
- the application and test of improved and new ISA tools in four case studies
- capacity-building, communication and outreach tasks, including stakeholder engagement.

About 75 researchers participated in the project, coordinated by Professor Jan Rotmans and managed by Marjan Minnesma (DRIFT, Netherlands). The project team was supported throughout by



an advisory board chaired by Professor Timothy O'Riordan, which provided high-level advice and guidance and acted as an ambassador for the project, enabling it to achieve appropriate outreach and to have impact in relevant quarters.

This brochure addresses policy makers and stakeholders all over Europe, who might be interested in implementing an ISA within their sphere of influence. It gives an overview of ISA, its tools, and how ISA is connected to related concepts. The EU-level scenarios elaborated within MATISSE and the case studies developed in order to test the ISA-concept are introduced as well.