

# Policy Coordination Mechanisms in the Integration of the Yangtze River Delta Region

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to explore the current state, challenges, and optimization pathways of policy coordination mechanisms in the process of integrating the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region. By analyzing the degree of coordination among various levels of government in policy formulation and implementation, this study evaluates its impact on achieving regional integration goals and proposes recommendations to promote policy coordination. The study finds that policy coordination mechanisms play a crucial role in achieving regional integration but face several challenges at present, including institutional barriers, conflicts of interest, and uneven resource distribution. Establishing a unified coordination agency, promoting the unification of laws and regulations, designing a reasonable benefit-sharing mechanism, and achieving integrated resource allocation can effectively promote policy coordination, thereby advancing regional integration development.

**Keywords:** Yangtze River Delta, regional integration, policy coordination, mechanism study, government governance

## 1. Introduction

The Yangtze River Delta region, comprising the entire areas of "three provinces and one city" (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui), is one of China's economically active, highly open, and innovation-capable regions [1]. The YRD regional integration has a foundation in economic and social development, technological innovation, open cooperation, major infrastructure, ecological environment, public services, and urban-rural development. To further enhance regional competitiveness and achieve coordinated economic, social, and ecological development, the Chinese government proposed the strategic goal of YRD regional integration [2]. The realization of this goal relies not only on the construction of various infrastructures and the promotion of economic policies but also on the efficient coordination of various levels of government in policy formulation and implementation [3].

In the regional integration process, policy coordination mechanisms play a core role. Effective policy coordination can avoid duplicate resource allocation and waste, maximizing regional overall advantages and achieving coordinated development among cities within the region. Therefore, studying the policy coordination mechanisms in YRD regional integration is of great theoretical and practical significance for promoting regional integration and enhancing regional governance capabilities.

Research on YRD regional integration has comprehensively explored issues and practical pathways in fields such as technology, education, transportation, and markets. Scholars have recognized the importance of intergovernmental relations and policy coordination in YRD regional integration. Studies on policy coordination mechanisms mainly focus on three aspects: coordination during policy formulation, coordination during policy implementation, and tools and methods for policy coordination, such as information-sharing platforms and coordination meeting systems.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The theory of regional integration primarily explores the process through which economic entities within a region achieve overall development through policy coordination, resource sharing, and market integration. This theory posits that regional integration can achieve economies of scale, economies of scope, and network effects, thereby enhancing the region's overall competitiveness. Policy coordination is crucial in this process as it ensures the unity and coordination of various policies, avoiding policy conflicts and resource waste.

### 3. Current State of Policy Coordination in YRD Regional Integration

In December 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the *Outline of the Yangtze River Delta Regional Integration Development Plan*. The *Outline* points out that by 2025, substantial progress will be made in the integrated development of the YRD, achieving basic integration in areas such as scientific and technological innovation, infrastructure, ecological environment, and public services. The *Outline* highlights that the mechanisms for cross-regional joint construction, sharing, protection, and governance are not yet sound, and the integration level of infrastructure, ecological environment, and public services needs improvement. It also mentions that the integration of scientific innovation and industries in the YRD is not deep enough, and the synergy in industrial development needs enhancement. Administrative barriers that hinder high-quality economic and social development in the YRD have not been completely broken, and a unified and open market system has yet to be formed. In August 2020, President Xi Jinping emphasized at the symposium on solidly advancing YRD integration: "Breaking administrative barriers and improving policy coordination with an integrated mindset and measures will allow elements to flow more smoothly over a larger area, leveraging the comparative advantages of each region, achieving more reasonable division of labor, gathering stronger synergy, and promoting high-quality development." His remarks directly address the current inadequacies in the intergovernmental coordination mechanism in the YRD [4].

#### 3.1. Policy Formulation

China implements a hierarchical administrative management system under the centralized and unified leadership of the Party [5]. In this administrative system, governments at all levels are the main entities managing the interests within their respective administrative regions. However, local governments in the YRD region face inadequacies in establishing a coordinated regional policy mechanism. Throughout the policy formulation process, governments within the YRD region have gradually established regional policy coordination mechanisms through regular joint meetings and information sharing. Yet, there are still challenges in practice, such as conflicts of interest among different regions, leading to difficulties in policy coordination.

Local governments retain autonomy in the policy formulation process. Although the central government provides policy guidance and frameworks, local governments still maintain a degree of autonomy. This autonomy allows local governments to formulate policies suitable for their actual local conditions but may also result in inconsistencies and coordination difficulties.

#### 3.2. Policy Implementation

During policy implementation, a series of enforcement mechanisms, including cross-departmental and cross-regional joint law enforcement and supervision mechanisms, have been established within the YRD region. Through these mechanisms, some policies have been effectively implemented. However, issues such as uneven enforcement intensity and imperfect supervision mechanisms still exist. Cross-regional cooperation faces numerous obstacles during policy implementation. For instance, uneven resource distribution and conflicts of interest cause resistance to policy implementation, affecting the process of regional integration.

### 4. Challenges in Policy Coordination for the Yangtze River Delta Regional Integration

#### 4.1. Institutional Barriers

Administrative barriers are a major obstacle in policy coordination. Differences in administrative levels and functions among various administrative divisions result in policy coordination difficulties. For example, the lack of a unified coordination mechanism among different levels of government leads to varied policy outcomes.

The lack of uniformity in local laws and regulations is another significant obstacle in policy coordination. The differences in laws and regulations among various areas in the YRD region pose challenges for cross-regional policy implementation. For instance, the differing standards and enforcement intensities of environmental protection policies make regional coordination difficult [6].

#### 4.2. Conflicts of Interest

The distribution of economic benefits among different regions is a major challenge in policy coordination. For example, some policies may negatively impact the economic development of certain areas, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm for policy implementation in these regions.

Differences in policy priorities among regions also lead to coordination difficulties. For instance, some areas may prioritize industrial development, while others may prioritize the development of the service industry, leading to inconsistent policy goals.

#### 4.3. Resource Allocation

Uneven resource allocation is an important issue in policy coordination. For example, the YRD region experiences imbalances in resource distribution, leading to a lack of necessary resource support in some areas during policy implementation.

Achieving integrated resource allocation requires a strong coordination mechanism. However, the current resource integration mechanism is still inadequate, resulting in inefficient resource distribution.

### 5. Pathways to Optimize Policy Coordination Mechanisms

#### 5.1. Establishing a Unified Coordination Agency

To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of policy coordination, it is recommended to establish a unified cross-regional coordination agency. This agency should have independent decision-making and enforcement powers. Its leadership should comprise senior officials with rich management experience from the YRD region to ensure scientific and authoritative decision-making. The agency should have various functional departments, such as policy formulation, policy implementation, and supervision and evaluation, to ensure clear division of labor and collaborative work. The agency's office should be located in a central city in the YRD, such as Shanghai, to facilitate communication and coordination with local governments.

The coordination agency should undertake the following main functions: policy formulation, ensuring the unity and coordination of policies for regional integration in the YRD; policy implementation, supervising and coordinating local governments to ensure effective policy implementation; and supervision and evaluation, establishing effective supervision mechanisms to regularly evaluate policy implementation, promptly identifying and resolving existing issues. The agency should publish evaluation reports regularly, making the progress and effectiveness of policy implementation public.

#### 5.2. Establishing Unified Laws and Regulations

Promoting the unification of laws and regulations within the region is key to overcoming institutional barriers. It is recommended to establish a special legislative process at the national level to promote the formulation and revision of laws and regulations related to YRD regional integration [7]. Through unified legislation, the coordination and consistency of laws and regulations within the region can be ensured. Local governments should actively cooperate with the national legislative process, adjusting and improving local laws and regulations to align with the national legal framework. Local governments should establish mechanisms for legal alignment, regularly exchanging and coordinating adjustments to laws and regulations. Promoting the unification of laws and regulations within the region can reduce institutional barriers.

It is also recommended to formulate unified enforcement standards to ensure consistent enforcement of laws and regulations across different regions. Under the guidance of the coordination agency, local governments should jointly participate in the formulation of unified enforcement standards to ensure fairness and justice in the enforcement process. Uniform training should be provided for law enforcement personnel within the region to ensure they are familiar with and proficient in the new enforcement standards, improving the level of law enforcement. Establishing cross-regional enforcement supervision mechanisms to strictly supervise the enforcement process ensures the strict implementation of enforcement standards.

#### 5.3. Establishing a Benefit-Sharing Mechanism

Designing a reasonable benefit-sharing mechanism to balance regional interests is an important means of promoting regional integration. It is recommended to establish a regional development fund to centrally manage and distribute resources and funds within the region, ensuring reasonable resource allocation and fair benefit distribution [8]. A scientific benefit distribution model should be established, considering factors such as the economic development level, resource endowment, and development potential of each region to reasonably distribute the regional development fund. Ensuring the transparency and fairness of the benefit-sharing mechanism is crucial, achieved through transparent operating procedures and strict supervision mechanisms to avoid unfair phenomena in benefit distribution.

During implementation, the effectiveness and operability of the benefit-sharing mechanism must be ensured. Regular regional benefit coordination meetings should be held with representatives from local governments to jointly discuss and resolve issues in benefit distribution. An evaluation mechanism for the benefit-sharing mechanism should be established to regularly assess its operation, ensuring fairness and effectiveness. Based on the evaluation results, the benefit-sharing mechanism should be adjusted in a timely manner to ensure dynamic balance in benefit distribution, avoiding long-term imbalances.

#### 5.4. Coordinating Resource Allocation

Establishing a resource integration mechanism to achieve reasonable allocation and efficient utilization of resources is essential [9]. Through establishing a unified resource management platform for the YRD region, centralized management and allocation of

resources within the region can be achieved. The resource management platform should include an information-sharing system, resource allocation system, and supervision and evaluation system. Scientific resource allocation policies should be formulated, clearly defining resource allocation principles and processes to ensure efficient and reasonable distribution of resources.

During implementation, the scientific and operable nature of the resource integration mechanism must be ensured. Detailed resource allocation plans should be formulated, specifying the goals, measures, and timelines for resource allocation to ensure orderly progress. Under the guidance of the coordination agency, local governments should closely cooperate to jointly formulate and implement resource allocation plans, ensuring reasonable distribution and efficient utilization of resources.

### 5.5. Information Sharing and Communication Mechanism

Establishing a unified information-sharing platform to achieve information sharing among local governments, enterprises, and the public within the region is crucial [10]. Timely publishing and updating regional policy information ensures local governments and enterprises are informed of policy dynamics. Sharing economic data and statistical information within the region provides a scientific basis for policy formulation and implementation.

Establishing a policy feedback and interaction mechanism to collect opinions and suggestions from local governments, enterprises, and the public, and promptly adjusting and improving policies is necessary [5]. A regional communication and coordination mechanism should be established to ensure efficient communication and coordination among local governments and enterprises [11]. Regular regional coordination meetings should be held with representatives from local governments and enterprises to jointly discuss and resolve issues encountered in the process of regional integration. An emergency coordination mechanism should be established to promptly respond to regional emergencies, ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of policy implementation.

By establishing a unified coordination agency, promoting the unification of laws and regulations, designing a reasonable benefit-sharing mechanism, achieving integrated resource allocation, and establishing an information-sharing and communication mechanism, the policy coordination mechanism for the YRD regional integration will be significantly optimized. This will effectively promote the process of regional integration, enhancing the overall competitiveness and development level of the region [12].

## 6. Conclusion

This study summarizes the main findings and highlights the critical role of the policy coordination mechanism in achieving the goals of regional integration in the YRD. It also identifies the current main issues and challenges.

Based on the research conclusions, specific policy recommendations are proposed, including establishing a unified coordination agency, promoting the unification of laws and regulations, designing a reasonable benefit-sharing mechanism, and achieving integrated resource allocation. These measures aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of policy coordination and promote the process of regional integration in the YRD.

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