



Societal Consultation Report

Negotiating Public Support

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2018

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Indicator

Negotiating Public Support

Question

To what extent does the government consult with societal actors to support its policy?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = The government successfully motivates societal actors to support its policy.
- 8-6 = The government facilitates the acceptance of its policy among societal actors.
- 5-3 = The government consults with societal actors.
- 2-1 = The government rarely consults with any societal actors.

Norway

Score 10

Norway is a consensus-oriented society. Interested parties are typically fully informed of measures under discussion and play an active role in the legislative process. In particular, there is a firm tradition of consultation with trade unions and business organizations. Interested parties are invited to express their views before new laws are presented to parliament. Indeed, parliamentary hearings have become more frequent and social confrontations over policymaking (e.g., political strikes or violent forms of protest) have become rarer in recent years. However, as the speed of decision-making is increasing, public-hearing processes often have to cope with short deadlines, limiting the actual influence of external societal actors.

Switzerland

Score 10

Within Switzerland's corporatist system there are numerous pre-parliamentary procedures and committees focused on consultation with various societal groups. These instruments are designed to prevent government proposals from failing in parliament or in referenda, and to offer solutions that benefit all parties. However, research shows that the degree of corporatist integration has declined in recent years. This is in part attributable to the growing intensity of conflicts between the social partners, as well to the influence of EU integration and internationalization. In addition, lobbying and pluralist pressure-group politics have gained in importance. If judged from a comparative perspective, the level of corporatist integration remains very high in Switzerland, but from a historical perspective it is low. In any case, direct democracy offers interest groups major influence by threatening to trigger a referendum. This offers strong incentives for political elites to incorporate major interest groups in policy development.

Denmark

Score 9 There is a long tradition of involving economic and social actors at all stages of the policy cycle, sometimes even in the implementation phase. Both formally and informally, there are valuable contacts between the government and main interest organizations (e.g., trade unions, employers, various business organizations and NGOs) as well as heads of major companies. This is also formalized in terms of the Economic Council, where the large organizations are represented. Interest organizations provide important information for politicians and civil servants. Corporatism still plays a role, although it has changed over the years. Recent examples of tripartite cooperation between the government, labor unions and employers include initiatives to improve the integration of immigrants into the labor market, and life-long learning. Engaging societal actors is a way for the government to gain information and create legitimacy for adopted policies.

Citation:

Henning Jørgensen, *Consensus, Cooperation and Conflict: The Policy Making Process in Denmark*, 2002.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen et al., *Politik og forvaltning*. 4. udg., 2017.

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udgave. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

Netherlands

Score 9 International references to the “polder model” as a form of consensus-building testify to the Dutch reputation for negotiating public support for public policies, sometimes as a precondition for parliamentary approval. In this form of neo-corporatism and network governance, the government consults extensively with vested interest groups in the economy and/or civil society during policy preparation and attempts to involve them in policy implementation. It has been a strong factor in the mode of political operation and public policymaking deployed by the Rutte I (2010 – 2012) and Rutte II (2012 – October 2017) governments. Recent examples include the public debate on pension reform and the national summit on climate policy after the Paris Accords. The Rutte I and Rutte II councils of ministers produced societal agreements on cutback policy, housing policy, care policy, energy policy and socioeconomic policy.

In spite of its apparent revival, this mode of politics and policymaking is under stress. Trade unions have suffered due to an erosion of representativeness and increasing fragmentation, although employers’ associations have been less affected. Quite recently. The Netherlands witnessed the unique phenomenon that both school teachers’ unions and employers (school administrators) together lobbied for higher

salaries and for workload reduction for elementary school teachers. The recent revival may owe more to the fact that the Rutte I and Rutte II cabinets have not been able to rely on solid parliamentary support than to any renewed vigor on the part of business and labor associations. A side-effect of the reviving “polder” tradition within a more fragmented political landscape may be the emergence of an extensive network of professional lobbyists. Due to rather closed cabinet formation processes, which have led to “boarded up” governmental agreements, professional lobbying is probably less effective than in the United States.

Citation:

R.B. Andeweg and G.A. Irwin (2014), *Governance and politics of the Netherlands*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 188-198, 230-251.

J. Woldendorp, (2013) *De polder is nog lang niet dood*, *Socialisme & Democratie*, jrg. 70, nr. 2, pp. 46-51

P.D. Culpepper, *Quiet Politics and Business Power. Corporate Control in Europe and Japan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011 (esp. ch. 4, *The Netherlands and the myth of the corporatist coalition*)

NRC-Handelsblad, *Het gebroken Nederland dat in 2017 op Den Haag afkomt*, 4 November 2016 (nrs.nl, consulted * November 2016)

‘Silent lobbying is no longer good enough’, interview with prof. dr. A. Timmermans, 19 May 2016 (universiteit leiden.nl, consulted 8 November 2016)

PO Raad, *Schoolbesturen steunen lerarenstaking*, 25 September 2017

“Onze superieure politieke cultuur,” NRC-Handelsblad, 13 July 2017

Austria

Score 8

The Austrian political system is quite inclusive, but is receptive primarily to particular interests. The corporatist network established after 1945, consisting of government, business and labor representatives, still functions. This allows the government to obtain information about the formation of societal interests, and to use this information to adapt its decision-making process. However, this explicit social partnership permits the appeasement of certain interests while excluding other groups that are not as efficiently organized as the major economic interest groups.

The system of officially recognized religious denominations provides another means of societal consultation. All major Christian churches as well as the Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist communities are included in decision-making processes for issues relevant to their faiths and activities.

The role played by these specific economic and noneconomic interest groups has been legally formalized: The government must consult with these groups on all draft bills before sending the proposal to parliament.

A new legal basis for the Islamic community has the potential to improve consultation mechanisms with a fast-growing religious community. The sensitivity

for the internal processes within the Islamic Community – especially concerning the responsibility for recruiting preachers and school teachers – has become greater due to the growth of that community.

The new coalition between the ÖVP – a party deeply rooted in the corporatist network – and the FPÖ (a party more or less outside this network) may change some elements of the system of consultation. The same applies to consultations involving officially recognized religious denominations.

Canada

Score 8

The departments and agencies of the Canadian government hold many consultations with economic and social actors on public policy issues. These consultations are motivated primarily by the desire to obtain input from Canadians before the government decides on a policy course, not by the desire to sell a particular policy to the population (this is not done through consultations). The most important consultations relate to the preparation of the annual budget. While the importance of trade unions in the consultation process has fallen significantly in recent years, this is not necessarily the case for other groups.

The duty to consult and accommodate Canada's indigenous peoples as laid down in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 has always been part of the legal and constitutional relationship between Canada and its indigenous population, and was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2010. However, many First Nations leaders allege that there is a general and persistent lack of genuine consultation at both the federal and the provincial level.

Prime Minister Trudeau promised that the consultation process would be restructured and that various groups, including indigenous groups, would be given greater voice. Trudeau's government organized public consultations and engaged a large number of stakeholders across many policy areas, including innovation, electoral reform, childcare and the renegotiation of NAFTA. Consultation with First Nations remains uneven, though. A recent example is the construction of the Site C dam in British Columbia. Many independent organizations, academics and First Nations groups have argued that the dam would undermine treaty rights and contradict the government's position on indigenous rights.

Citation:

Rio Tinto Alcan Inc. v. Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, [2010] S.C.J. No. 43.

Amnesty International (2016). The Point of No Return: The Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples Threatened by the Site C Dam. Available at <http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/amnesty/files/Canada%20Site%20C%20Report.pdf>

Finland

Score 8 In Finland's consensus-oriented political system, interest organizations and associations are regularly consulted. Although the corporatist system adopted in the 1960s has now declined, the exchange of views and information with a variety of social interests is still part and parcel of the everyday activities of the Finnish government. Through various mechanisms such as committee hearings, joint-council memberships and expert testimony, bills and drafts are circulated to interested parties who are then invited to critique the draft legislation. Various laws and guidelines, such as the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, contain provisions on consultation and participation. By and large, the system functions reasonably well. Admittedly, consultation tends to favor organized groups and neglects outside participation. It is also the case that consultation is carried out mainly to build consensus rather than to gather support or assess impact. However, in the long run, this helps to generate public support for government policies. Still, recent developments indicate a weakening in the role played by the tripartite negotiation of labor-market agreements between the government, employers groups and employee organizations.

Latvia

Score 8 Societal consultation takes place frequently and is diverse in nature. The National Tripartite Cooperation Council (Nacionālā trīspusējās sadarbības padome, NTSP) is a well-established, well-integrated and often-used consultative mechanism that links employers, trade unions and government.

The Council of Ministers maintains a NGO cooperation council, which organizes NGO input into issues related to civil society. The number of NGO participants over the 10 years of this council's existence has risen from an initial 57 to almost 400 in 2015. Ministries have their own sectoral consultative bodies. The executive branch has 165 different consultative bodies, a slight decrease from a high of 173 in 2011, but the number of NGOs participating in these bodies has increased from 980 to 1,128 over the same period.

Despite this quantitative evidence of consultation, the quality of consultations is often questionable. Consultations are perceived as formal, and in fact offer little opportunity to make an impact on the direction and quality of government policies. NGOs have voiced complaints about the quality of participation, prompting the Council of Ministers/NGO cooperation council to conduct a cross-ministry review of consultation practices during 2011 and 2012. In 2017, an influential group of NGOs called for more transparency and participatory mechanisms in the budget planning process.

This was partially realized in the 2017 tax reform and reflects a long-term trend toward greater engagement with societal actors. Trade unions as well as business and employers' associations had the opportunity to participate in the debates and discussions on the tax reform and influenced the final legislation.

However, in its public consultations, the government is rarely successful in achieving an exchange of views that substantively increases the quality of government policies or induces societal actors to support them. Best practices can be found in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development. Both ministries publicly fund a consultation mechanism with NGOs and have achieved considerable success in securing stakeholder input and support for draft policies. There is also evidence of the opposite result: in some cases, government consultations with stakeholders have induced societal actors to actively oppose government policies. In the education sector, active consultations with stakeholders led to attempts throughout 2012 to block government policy proposals as well as multiple calls for the resignation of the minister. Despite extensive consultations throughout 2014 and 2015, teacher unions organized a one-day strike in late 2015 over education-funding reforms. Similarly, despite long-standing discussions on health sector reforms, family doctors went on strike in 2017.

Citation:

State Chancellery (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015,2016), Reports, Available at (in Latvian): <http://www.mk.gov.lv/vk/gada-parskats/>, Last assessed: 10.11.2017.

Luxembourg

Score 8

Luxembourg is a consensus-oriented society with a well-known model of neo-corporatism (the Luxembourg Model), which became institutionalized in the aftermath of the steel crisis in the 1970s. When introducing a draft bill to parliament, the government normally launches a broad consultation process. Unions and employers' organizations are consulted in any case; every draft bill is submitted to the respective organization of employees (Chambre des Salariés) and to employers' organizations (Chambre de Commerce and Chambre des Métiers). Depending on the purpose of the draft bill or the new policy, civil society is included in the process. Nevertheless, the so-called tripartite system is considered to have failed in 2010, when the three partners were unable to reach an agreement on critical issues. However, the new government in 2013 relaunched the social dialog with employers and employees and the process has functioned reasonably well since then.

Citation:

Clément, Franz. *Consociativisme et dialogue social: Les relations professionnelles au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*. Éditions universitaires européennes, 2012.

"Mémorial A n° 144 de 2015." *Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, 27 July 2015, legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/memorial/2015/144. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

"Sind Konkordanz-, Konsens- und Drei-Partnermodelle "Schönwetter-Veranstaltungen"? Das Beispiel

Luxembourg.” *Konkordanzdemokratie: Ein Demokratietyp der Vergangenheit?*, edited by Stefan Köppl and Uwe Kranenpohl, Nomos, 2012, pp. 117 – 132.

“Système politique.” Le portail officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, www.luxembourg.public.lu/fr/le-grand-duche-e-presente/systeme-politique/index.html. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

“Xavier Bettel au sujet des défis du nouveau gouvernement.” Le portail officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 18 Dec. 2013, www.gouvernement.lu/3370722/16-bettel-tageblatt. Accessed 21 Dec. 2017.

New Zealand

Score 8

New Zealand has a strong tradition of broad policy consultation with interest groups and with its citizens. The need for consultation has been enhanced by two developments. One is the change to a multiparty system and the formation of minority governments, which require the support of smaller parties to be able to pass legislation. The other relates to a greater diversity and sophistication of voters, with political views that are more difficult to predict and no longer fit within a simple left-right dynamic. While it may be the case that the ideologies of some parties may make them more compatible than others, under a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system it is not always easy to predict where a minor party will sit on a particular issue. Moreover, elected representatives of local governments have generally avoid partisan affiliations, and local governments have a tradition of consulting with their citizens and communities, and consultation is mandated in many cases under the Local Government Act 2002. Consultation is also commonly used by central government agencies with respect to new policy initiatives. When a consultation has taken place, the details of consultations, internal and external, need to be set out in regulatory impact statements. While parliamentary select committees hold hearings on proposed legislation once it has been introduced in parliament, giving individuals and organizations the opportunity to make written or oral submissions, the incidence of by-passing select committees by introducing bills under urgency is growing. In late 2015, for example, a high-profile law to monitor the activities of New Zealand citizens with criminal records who had been deported from Australia was passed under conditions of urgency, thereby precluding any opportunity for public input or debate. In 2014, the government allowed a mere three days of public submissions as part of a review of New Zealand’s anti-terrorism laws. In addition to the aforementioned tools for measuring public opinion, both the government and organizations that are likely to be affected by policy outcomes make increasing use of opinion polls, media and online comment and focus groups. One such initiative was the establishment of a Rules Reduction Taskforce by the local government minister in October 2014. The taskforce held community meetings across the country to hear complaints from property-owners groups and local government about ineffective property rules.

Citation:

Cabinet Office Circular CO (09) 8: Regulatory Impact Analysis Requirements: New Guidance (Wellington: Cabinet Office 2009).

Local Government Act 2002: <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/DLM172326.html> (accessed October 9, 2014).

Sweden

Score 8

Consultation with societal actors has historically been of a defining feature of Swedish (and Scandinavian) neo-corporatist governance, and such arrangements are still in place to a large extent. In this corporatist arrangement, government consults with key societal partners on a wide range of issues. Stakeholders are thus given an opportunity to influence public policy from the early stages of the policy process until implementation.

The more specific nature of the relationship between the state and societal actors is changing, however. Previously, these contacts were institutionalized with all major players invited to provide input on almost all major policy issues. Today, these consultations are more ad hoc and strategic. The current red-green government appears to have a more continuous dialog with organized interests, primarily the unions, than the earlier “Alliance” government. Even so, Swedish corporatism is weaker today than it was in the 1970s and 1980s. The previously mentioned decline of the Royal Commissions is one important example of the reduction of societal consultation in Sweden under the period of review. Overall, most observers today agree that corporatism as a model of governance has been significantly weakened in Sweden.

However, there have also been some tendencies toward increasing societal consultation. The increasing significance of so-called new modes of governance – networks, markets, partnerships and so on – has opened up new arenas for exchanges and communication between government institutions and organized interests. Also, studies show that societal actors now target specific institutions rather than engaging the state as a whole. Unions, for example, still target public institutions that draft policy, whereas business organizations are more active vis-à-vis executive agencies.

Citation:

Pierre, J. (ed) (2015), *Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), esp. Section 10.

Pierre, J. and B. G. Peters (2005), *Governing Complex Societies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Svensson, T. and P-O.Öberg (2010), “Does Power Drive out Trust? Relations between Labor Market Actors in Sweden,” *Political Studies* 58:143-166.

Öberg, P-O, S. Oskarsson and T. Svensson (2011), “Similarity versus Homogeneity: Contextual Effects in Explaining Trust,” *European Political Science Review* 3:345-369.

Australia

Score 7

The degree of societal consultation on policy development varies depending on the issue, the party in government and numerous contextual factors. The key groups often consulted are trade unions and business-advocacy groups, but other special interests – religious groups, environmental organizations and pro-family groups, for

example – also have advocacy groups that are sometimes brought into discussions about policy. Traditionally, Labor governments have been more likely to consult with trade unions, while coalition governments have been more likely to consult with business groups. However, governments of both persuasions have engaged in extensive consultation on some policies while ignoring consultation on others.

Citation:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/about/core-functions/inquiries-and-studies>

Chile

Score 7

Frequent consultations with civil society groups and particularly stakeholder organizations take place. However, consultations tend to be inclined toward economic interest groups. By contrast, unions and environmental organizations are frequently underrepresented. Online surveys have been implemented with the aim of gauging opinions within the non-institutionalized public. The president's advisory ministry (Secretaría General de la Presidencia, Segpres) is primarily responsible for initiating and monitoring consultations. Depending on the issue, sectoral institutions can also be involved. The ad hoc advisory commissions represent another means of societal consultation, as they include interest-group representatives, experts and other stakeholders.

Estonia

Score 7

Consultations with societal actors are regulated by government guidelines contained in the Good Engagement Practices (GEP) document, approved in 2011. Although not legally binding, it prescribes in detail procedures for engaging social stakeholders in the policymaking process. The GEP includes eight recommended principles, which place importance on the clarity of goals, openness of relationships, and dedication to goals. Once a year, the Government Office presents an overview of the GEP's implementation to the government. All ministries employ an engagement coordinator who assists interested citizens and advocacy groups.

Existing regulations and established practices render it almost impossible to avoid interest groups' involvement in the policymaking process. The main focus is on consultations during the preparatory phase, when a broad range of societal actors is typically involved. However, at later stages, only those advocacy organizations tending to be supportive of the proposed policy are invited to the table. Thus, corporatist tendencies are becoming apparent that are not entirely in accordance with GEP principles. Furthermore, engagement practices have not yet been extended to the policy-implementation or policy-evaluation phases.

Germany

Score 7

In general, government representatives meet with societal stakeholders as part of their daily routine. Nevertheless, the last CDU/CSU-SPD government did not make use of social pacts or other direct bargaining mechanisms. As under previous governments, ministries and parliamentary committees relied heavily on information provided by interest groups, and took their proposals or demands into account when developing legislation. The impact of civil society actors in general depends on their power, resources and organizational status. Since interests are sometimes mediated through institutionalized corporatist structures, employers' associations and unions play a privileged role. On a regular basis, experts and interest groups take part in parliamentary committee hearings in the course of the legislative process.

During the last grand coalition's term of office, all government parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD, sought to live up to the promises made in the coalition agreement in order to satisfy the perceived interests of their respective electorates. Some major policy projects – such as the introduction of a minimum wage and a reduction in the statutory pension age for workers with a particularly long working history (from 65 to 63) that have been advocated by certain interest groups (primarily trade unions), were indeed realized. However, bargaining processes are not highly institutionalized and interest representation is often highly selective and conducted on an ad hoc basis.

With regard to non-economic societal actors, the German Islam Conference is supposed to assist in the development of an intercultural dialogue between government officials and Muslim civil society organizations. The institution celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2016, but little progress has been realized. On the contrary, conflicts between its members, mainly between the government and the DiTib, increased and its future seems uncertain. However, achievements like the introduction of Islamic religious instruction at state schools and the establishment of chairs for Islamic theology at German universities are examples of its success.

Lithuania

Score 7

In Lithuania, major societal actors are consulted through institutionalized arrangements such the Tripartite Council, as well as through various ad hoc means. Major societal actors were also involved in the preparation and monitoring of the long-term Lithuania 2030 strategy, working through the State Progress Council. Under the Skvernelis government, a new accord was signed between the government, business organizations and trade unions. The accord provides for the preparation of a separate agreement between these partners, which would reduce taxes on wages in exchange for employers' commitment to increase wages. The Kubilius, Butkevičius and Skvernelis governments carried out public consultation on

a number of policy issues, including pension-system reform, a national energy-independence strategy, anti-corruption policy, open-government measures or tax reform. The practice of prior consultation in developing regulations is mandated by the Law on the Basics of Legislation.

However, the scope of consultation with societal actors remains insufficient, as the consultation process is limited to an exchange of information and positions, with little attempt to achieve consensus among the stakeholders involved. In addition, according to the 2015 OECD report on regulatory policy in Lithuania, the time allocated to consultation is insufficient, and the quality of feedback is insufficiently high. Moreover, the impact-assessment process also suffers from a lack of consultation, despite the adoption of new legal provisions in recent years to address this issue. For these reasons, a 2015 OECD report recommended that the country develop public-consultation guidelines and allow more time for consultation. In response, the Government Office launched a large stakeholder consultation project co-funded by the European Social Fund at the end of 2016.

Citation:

OECD, Regulatory Policy in Lithuania: Focusing on the Delivery Side, OECD Reviews of Regulatory Reform, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015 http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/regulatory-policy-in-lithuania_9789264239340-en.

United Kingdom

Score 7

The United Kingdom has less of a tradition, compared to many other EU countries, of systematically incorporating civil society organizations into the decision-making process. Nevertheless, a significant effort has been made since 2010 to make government more open. This effort has led to a substantial increase in policymaking transparency and has included systematic efforts to consult a range of actors. However, the extent to which social partners are formally engaged in the policymaking process continues to be less than in many other western European countries. The previous coalition government established a “Compact” to govern civil society engagement in the policymaking process in England, under the auspices of a (junior) Minister for Civil Society. Civil society is also listed as one of the responsibilities of the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The United Kingdom was a founding member of the Open Government Partnership, as part of which it is committed to producing a national action plan to engage with civil society. The current plan detailed a range of commitments. According to a recent self-assessment, some three-quarters of these commitments have already been achieved or are underway, though 27% of these commitments are behind schedule. Impact assessments are one means by which consultation has been enhanced, with drafts circulated to stakeholders before being finalized. Feedback on these drafts considered before decisions are taken on whether or not to proceed with the policy change under review. In 2014, some 650 public consultation processes took place, all described on the gov.uk website and this increased further in 2017 when 761 were

conducted. In addition, a range of Advisory Boards solicit input into the policymaking process in areas such as migration and social security. Given the pluralist nature of the UK system of interest groups and associations, it can be difficult to identify which organization would be competent and legitimized to speak on a certain issue. However, through initiatives such as the “Policy Lab,” set up in 2014, the Cabinet Office has established a catchy approach to open policymaking. The United Kingdom continues to be prominent in the Open Government Partnership and made good progress toward the National Action Plan 2016 – 2018.

The 2016 Brexit referendum was unusual in negotiating public support. As had happened in the only previous EU referendum in 1975, members of the government and parliamentarians taking the governing Conservative Party whip were given the right to be leading members of the “leave” campaign, even though the official government position was to support “remain.” Similar dispensation was given to opposition shadow ministers.

Citation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/compact-the-agreement-between-government-and-the-voluntary-community-sector>

<https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/about/>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668970/Final_mid-term_self_assessment_report_NAP_2016-18.pdf

Belgium

Score 6

Belgium’s socioeconomic model is one of consensual (neocorporatist) socioeconomic policymaking, whereby the government consults established stakeholders, in particular workers’ and employers’ representatives, in order to facilitate policy acceptance. Such consultations have also become institutionalized in other fields through the creation of specific consultative bodies, for instance the Federal Council for Sustainable Development, which includes representatives of environmental organizations.

Unionization rates are still very high in Belgium, with membership rates close to 50% (ranging up to 70% in some sectors) in 2012, the most recent year for which figures are available. This is one of the highest such rates in Europe. However, recent technological change with regard to services platforms (Uber and its peers), the internationalization of the economy, trade agreements such as CETA, and efforts by the current (right-wing) government to reduce the power of workers’ unions (which are politically allied with left-wing parties) have progressively eroded unions’ influence, changing the government’s hands-off tradition of letting workers’ and employers’ unions negotiate wage arrangements. Arguably, some of this culture of consensus had previously stalled important but necessary reforms. Nevertheless, the current government’s strategy has come as a cultural shock.

Citation:

[http://homepages.ulb.ac.be/~sodorcha/doc/RCTNM/2014-](http://homepages.ulb.ac.be/~sodorcha/doc/RCTNM/2014-2015/Acteurs123_RCT_cours%202_10022015_donn%C3%A9_NB.pdf)

[2015/Acteurs123_RCT_cours%202_10022015_donn%C3%A9_NB.pdf](http://homepages.ulb.ac.be/~sodorcha/doc/RCTNM/2014-2015/Acteurs123_RCT_cours%202_10022015_donn%C3%A9_NB.pdf)

[http://plus.lesoir.be/120897/article/2017-10-24/la-concertation-sociale-des-rates-un-nouveau-modele-social-arrive\)](http://plus.lesoir.be/120897/article/2017-10-24/la-concertation-sociale-des-rates-un-nouveau-modele-social-arrive)

<http://plus.lesoir.be/111659/article/2017-08-30/la-cgsp-veut-ranimer-le-front-anti-michel>

www.fgtb.be/-/pourquoi-la-greve-le-10-octobre-

Czech Republic

Score 6

The policy process in the Czech Republic is relatively open. In the course of the legislative process, a broad spectrum of social and economic actors are consulted. The digital publication of laws and regulations has improved public access to information. The main formal means of consultation is a tripartite council including government, trade unions and employers' organizations. This is an arena for consultation on economic and social policy measures, and the council members are also automatically consulted during the process of preparing legislation. Various other forms of dialog with citizens in preparing important decisions are spreading at national, regional and local levels.

France

Score 6

The traditional distrust regarding "lobbyists," not seen as legitimate political actors, and the difficult social relations in France that hinder effective social dialog, have limited the capacity of governments to seamlessly or successfully find avenues of negotiation and cooperation. There are thousands of official or semi-official commissions that are supposed to give opinions on a given issue or area; however, governments tend to prefer negotiations with selected partners, excluding some considered as not being "representative." Consultations are often rather formal, and interested parties very often have no willingness to find a compromise. For these reasons, the temptation to govern top-down has always been strong, provoking in many cases severe, repeated conflicts and protest movements that have often successfully vetoed governmental action.

This being said, things are beginning to change. In recent years, governments have sought the consultation of interest groups more systematically, and these practices have partly been adopted as legal obligations. Moreover, the rules of social negotiations have been modernized to encourage social contracts between employers and trade unions. Notably, the Larcher Law of 2007 invited the government to present plans for legislation in social and labor matters to the social partners, and to give the social partners an opportunity to negotiate and agree on possible solutions that could then be transformed into law. Nonetheless, given persistent distrust between the social actors, especially on the part of some unions, progress has been slow. There are positive cases, such as the 2013 reform bill on the labor market. This

reform bill followed an agreement between three (out of five) trade unions and the employers' organization, which was then transformed into law. But have been setbacks, too. In 2016, the first draft of a new labor law was put forward by the government without consultation, provoking massive social protest. In panic, the government withdrew its draft to negotiate a new one. This erratic method of government left unions and employers totally frustrated. So far, President Macron has followed a different path, proceeding with intensive consultations first while leaving little room for change once a government proposal is drafted. An illustration of this method has been the ordinances for reforming labor law in 2017: intense negotiations with the social partners took place in July and August but the ordinances, while taking into account some trade union grievances, were presented to the social partners as non-negotiable decisions once drafted. After the government signed them on 22 September 2017 they were immediately applicable. As the unions were divided, the protests of the most radical forces (CGT) have been unable to slow down or impede their implementation.

Iceland

Score 6

Iceland has a long tradition of formal and informal consultation between government and labor market associations. The 2008 economic collapse led to greater and closer consultation. In February 2009, the government, the municipalities, and the major labor market associations signed the so-called Stability Pact (Stöðugleikasáttmáli). Repeated disputes finally led to a withdrawal from the pact by the main employers' association.

Another example of public consultation was the process of revising the 1944 constitution. This process involved the creation of a national assembly, comprising 950 individuals selected at random from the national register. In addition, a further 25 constituent assembly representatives were nationally elected from a list of 522 candidates. The constituent assembly, later called the Constitutional Council, unanimously passed a constitutional bill in close accord with the conclusions of the national assembly in 2011. However, parliament has not yet ratified the bill, even though the bill received the support of 67% of voters in a national referendum in October 2012. Parliament's disregard for the result of the constitutional referendum is seen by many as a serious blow to Iceland's democracy. Before the parliamentary elections in October 2016 all four opposition parties declared that, if elected, they would seek to form a government that would ratify the new constitution. In the 2017 election campaign, five parties declared, to varying degrees, support for the new constitution, namely the Social Democrats, the Pirate Party, the Left-Green Movement, Regeneration and Bright Future. The support for these parties totaled 46% of the votes and 28 out of 63 seats. The only firm opponent of the new constitution, the Independence Party, won 25% of the vote and 16 seats.

Wage disputes affected labor market stability in 2014 and 2015 beginning with strikes by doctors and nurses. In late 2015, the government, several trade unions and

employers' associations signed a deal on wage contract negotiation methods, which would move Iceland toward the so-called Nordic corporatist model. This SALEK deal covered about 70% of all trade union members. At the time of writing, the other 30% still have not made any SALEK deal and a realization of the deal seems to be distant.

Citation:

Constitutional Bill (2012), <http://www.thjodaratkvaedi.is/2012/en/proposals.html>

Euractiv.com, <http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/icelanders-opens-way-crowdsourcing-ews-515543>

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Ireland

Score 6

Three public-sector agreements on pay and working conditions were negotiated between 2010 and 2013. The cumulative effect of these measures has been significant changes in pay and working conditions in the public sector, and a marked increase in productivity. However, some trade unions, notably in the educational sector, have rejected these proposals and some significant problems remain unresolved.

During 2016, improved economic performance shifted the focus toward containing public expectations that tax and expenditure disciplines would be significantly relaxed. In 2016, these expectations led to a strike of Dublin's public tramway system workers and a threatened strike by the police force, which resulted in overly generous settlements. As a result of these settlements, the government now faces the dilemma of trying to resist further demands for public-sector pay increases.

The government now consults with workers and employers in the private sector on pay policy to a much lesser extent than was the case before 2008. Wage settlements are largely reached through discussion and negotiation between the affected parties.

Citation:

The latest public-sector agreement is here:

<http://www.per.gov.ie/haddington-road-agreement>

Israel

Score 6

The critical role of civil society during the "Cast Lead" military operation in 2008 and the growing third sector in Israel inspired government decision 3190, which calls for more societal consultation and intersectoral cooperation in the policy formation process. Civil protests in 2011 brought the issue of social dialogue to the forefront once again, with public complaints targeting obscure governmental budgetary

procedures. Moreover, internal pressure to increase information sharing and transparency came from parliament members. However, the government has responded only partially to these demands, mainly through the establishment of a yearly roundtable event at which invited representatives discuss current and future government policies and the launch of designated “open” governmental websites, and by allowing greater participation by NGOs in policy debates. In April 2015, the PMO sought candidates for a new job, the public sharing and collaborations director. As the third sector and alternative media outlets gain a stronger voice in Israeli society, consultations with civil society could take on a greater role in the policy process

Citation:

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“Round table interface: Three years summary,” PMO official brochure (August 2011) (Hebrew)

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“The round table and the tri-sectoral discourse,” Civil leadership website (Hebrew)

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[https://ejobs.gov.il/gius\(bD1oZSZjPTI4MA==\)/tender/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZT1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDUwNTZCRjAwMTEeRUU0QjhCOTIGNUEzNjExQ0IzRg%3D%3D](https://ejobs.gov.il/gius(bD1oZSZjPTI4MA==)/tender/application.do?PARAM=cmNmdHlwZT1waW5zdCZwaW5zdD0wMDUwNTZCRjAwMTEeRUU0QjhCOTIGNUEzNjExQ0IzRg%3D%3D)

Japan

Score 6

LDP-led governments have traditionally engaged in societal consultation through the so-called iron triangle, that is, the dense links between parliamentarians, the ministerial bureaucracy and large companies. However, these mechanisms tended to exclude other societal actors, including trade unions and small and medium-sized enterprises. With the onset of economic problems in the 1990s, tensions within this triangle increased, and relations over time became strained enough to indicate the effective demise of the iron triangle system, at least at the national level.

With respect to the current LDP-Komeito coalition, the Buddhist lay association Soka Gakkai provides the bulk of support for Komeito, and has consequently gained some influence over policy matters that relate to the organization’s interests. This has been particularly evident during the ongoing debate over constitutional reform. The LDP is in favor of this reform, while Soka Gakkai and Komeito have a pacifist background, and have sought to slow down any major initiative. Abe enjoys the support of the conservative Nippon Kaigi lobby group, but its influence is difficult to substantiate and is possibly overrated in sensationalist media reports.

It is frequently argued that business has considerable influence on government decision-making in Japan. Substantiating such claims is difficult as there is a lack of

transparent rules governing lobbying. There seems to be little scope for business-state alignment, as major firms have become global players that are decreasingly interested in or bound to the home market. One traditional mechanism of bureaucracy-business alignment, the “amakudari” system of providing retiring bureaucrats with lucrative jobs, has been suppressed since the 2008 reform to the National Civil Service Law. A 2017 scandal involving the Education Ministry (MEXT), which had still run a camouflaged amakudari system, and in whose wake 43 ministry officials including the vice-minister were dismissed, shows that this mechanism has indeed outlived its time.

Citation:

Grant Newsham, Japan’s conservative Nippon Kaigi lobby: Worth worrying about?, Asia Times, 19 July 2016, <http://www.atimes.com/article/japans-conservative-nippon-kaigi-lobby-worth-worrying-about/>

William Pesek, Why Isn’t Japan Inc. Helping Japan?, Bloomberg View, 13 January 2015, <http://www.bloombergvew.com/articles/2015-01-13/japan-inc-isnt-very-japanese-any-longer>

Yumiko Yokota, Ending “Amakudari” Descent from Heaven at Last?, <http://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00317/>

Malta

Score 6

The government has an obligation to consult. In addition, a ministry for dialog has been established. New policies and legislation must be published for consultation. A formal consultative structure, called the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, works well in facilitating consultation between business associations, trade unions and government. The government has also setup a separate Council for Economic and Social Development for Gozo and a consultative council for the South of Malta. NGOs concerned with social policy tend to be regularly consulted while a huge divide separates environmental NGOs from the policymaking process. Overall, Malta has seen a substantial increase in the number of policy areas open for public consultation. Malta today has a proliferation of NGOs and increased consultation has created wider scope for them to act. However, greater progress can be achieved if NGOs become more professional and officialdom less sensitive to criticism. Key policy areas such as health care were not opened up to consultation (e.g., on the sale of government hospitals); medical professionals are now threatening strikes in order to be heard.

Citation:

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151005/local/second-public-consultation-on-regulation-of-drones.587085>

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<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150910/local/energy-rules-consultation.583796>

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<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20150829/local/white-paper-on-schools-role-in-alleviating-traffic-congestion-launched.582378>

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http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/lifestyle/health/69774/watch_conference_highlights_ngos_contribution_in_health_sector#.We2cCluCyM8
http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/64883/social_dialogue_minister_stresses_role_of_ngos_in_outreach_programmes#.We2ciluCyM8

Slovakia

Score 6

The third Fico government has not assigned much importance to consultation with societal actors. If consultation has taken place, it has often boiled down to window dressing. The Council for Solidarity and Development established in 2012 has not included social and environmental NGOs or representatives of national minorities. As in previous years, the tripartite consultation on the minimum wage failed, so that the cabinet took the decision to raise the minimum wage to €480 in 2018 unilaterally.

South Korea

Score 6

There have been major improvements with regard to consultation with societal actors since President Moon took office. The new administration announced its national vision under the motto “A Nation of the People,” and has reaffirmed the fact that the people are the rightful owners of the nation, while promising to run state affairs in accordance with the constitutional spirit of popular sovereignty. And indeed, compared to the Park administration, the current government has already shown more willingness to consult and communicate with various social actors. During the review period, President Moon met with representatives of Korea’s top labor organizations, including the leaders of the country’s top two umbrella labor unions – the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) – to discuss the new administration’s economic and labor policies. This meeting signaled the government’s willingness to communicate closely with labor organizations.

In the case of nuclear-power policies, some argue that President Moon has gone too far in outsourcing decisions to a commission composed of members of the general public. In his election campaign, he promised to discontinue the construction of two new nuclear-power plants and phase out nuclear power in general. However, after the election, he promised to follow public opinion on this matter, and formed a state commission of 471 civilians that after deliberation made the decision to finish the construction of the two power plants, while abandoning any additional planning for new nuclear-power plants.

President Moon's interactions with the public are also significantly different than those of his predecessor. He has emphasized the importance of being more open and communicative with the public. He has promised to continue having frequent discussions with the county's top business leaders, and to hold more active Q&A sessions during press briefings.

Citation:

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Korea Times, Construction of Shin-Kori 5 and 6 reactors resumes, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/biz/2017/10/367_238189.html

Bulgaria

Score 5

Partly following traditions established during the socialist period, Bulgaria has developed a number of bodies that represent various interests in the process of policymaking. A prime example of this tradition is the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, which includes representatives of the government, trade unions and employer associations. Over the years this council has evolved into a major forum not only for advice and consultation, but also for the negotiation of various policies and the adoption of specific proposals that are later formally confirmed legislatively. Other societal actors, including minority organizations, environmental and other interest groups are represented in the more than 70 advisory councils at different levels of government. In practice, however, their influence on decisions is limited. An increasing number of government agencies are adopting a default policy to make their deliberations open to the general public.

Citation:

Bohle, D., B. Greskovits (2012): *Capitalist diversity on Europe's periphery*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cyprus

Score 5

Consultation with societal actors has been a general practice for decades. However, assumptions on the possible reactions of stakeholders has often lead Cyprian governments to engage in consultations, mostly with powerful trade unions, only when a threat seems serious. This has lead to more vociferous stakeholders. The need to abide by the clauses of the MoU led the government to sharply reduce consultation procedures. However, public demands rejected in previous years received government approval in 2016 and 2017, including the quasi-abandonment of projects to privatize telecoms and electricity. Less powerful groups and unions have been less successful under the crisis conditions.

Public consultation before rule-making is a regular practice in some departments but less systematic than needed. The results and real role of such consultations are not always transparent or published.

The presidential system prompts the government to consult with political parties, while, in most cases, consultation with stakeholders is accomplished in the course of parliamentary committee meetings.

Citation:

1. The Scandalous Way Decisions are Taken, Opinion, Cyprus Mail, 6 September 2017, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/09/06/view-scandalous-way-important-decisions-taken/>

Italy

Score 5

Consultations with economic and social actors have not been a key priority for recent governments. Pressed by the need to face a very difficult budgetary and economic situation, recent governments have been reluctant to involve themselves in long and (according to experience) often unproductive consultations. Former prime minister Renzi in particular, who was keen to communicate the image of an innovative and responsive government, tried to avoid entangling himself in official discussions with trade unions, which are increasingly less popular. He also publicly criticized trade union leaders for being too conservative and focused on the interests of the most protected employees, while ignoring the problems of unemployed people. The Gentiloni government's style is less confrontational. The government has tried to consult trade unions more extensively, particularly concerning the delicate question of reforming the pension system. However, these consultations have not been particularly successful. Relations between the government and the employers' association, Confindustria, have been smoother.

Slovenia

Score 5

Slovenia has a strong tradition of corporatism and of government consultation with interest groups more generally. The Cerar government has stuck to this tradition and has discussed part of its legislative initiatives in the Economic and Social Council, the tripartite body for social and economic dialog. The government managed to reach agreement with the social partners over several cornerstones of its legislative program, including a further round of wage restraint in the public sector and a reform of the pay scale for public servants in 2017. In other cases, however, consultations have failed to produce any results, with trade unions complaining that the government does not take their positions or negotiations seriously.

Citation:

Lužar, B., A. Selan, T. Čelebič (2017): Slovenia: Developments in Working Life 2017. Dublin, 4-14 (<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2018/annual-review-of-working-life-2017#workingpapers>).

Spain

Score 5 The conservative Popular Party government, which held power throughout the review period, engaged in little consultation with societal actors after it took office in late 2011. However, coinciding with the economic recovery and end of the absolute majority government's term, the government has improved communication with the two big trade unions (UGT and CCOO) and the main employers' association (CEOE) to introduce reforms, for example, on wages.

Beyond this, line ministries still tend to consult with the economic and social actors important in their various policy areas, both private (especially businesses associations and the Catholic Church) and public (other ministries, autonomous regions, parties), in the course of making decisions. The extent and success of this consultation in preparing policy initiatives depends on the particular sector and the personality of the minister. In some cases, consultation and exchange of views is institutionalized through advisory bodies, although there are policy areas in which the traditionally good relations with societal actors have today been badly damaged (e.g., with NGOs involved in international development assistance, as a result of massive foreign-aid budget cuts).

Citation:

September 2016, El Mundo: "Méndez de Vigo se reúne con padres, profesores y alumnos para buscar un Pacto de Estado por la Educación

http://www.elmundo.es/so_ciedad/2016/09/18/57de591b46163f295_18b4572.html

United States

Score 5 The U.S. political system is outstanding in the degree to which it elicits opinions and preferences from societal actors at all stages of the policy process, and enables such actors to shape policy outcomes. These processes, however, are informal, decentralized and not especially conducive to careful deliberation. In the U.S. system, the president and congressional leaders must build congressional support for each measure. Interest groups, ideological activists, experts and ordinary citizens have extensive opportunity to influence policymakers before decisions have been made. Societal responses are elicited in a variety of ways. The White House maintains direct relationships with some interest groups. Congressional committees hold hearings on most legislative initiatives and on general policy issues. Furthermore, the president, party leaders and major interest groups use media-based strategies to mobilize public opinion, often using targeting strategies to reach sympathetic groups. In sum, the U.S. government is exceptionally open to influence by societal forces. This openness is not designed to ensure consensus and does not do so, although action without broad support is normally difficult.

In 2017, the Republican-controlled Congress surprised commentators with the degree to which it pushed legislation that was opposed by most interest groups and

the general public. The health care reform – narrowly defeated in the Senate – was opposed by most interest groups and professional associations (e.g., insurance companies, physicians’ associations, health care providers). The tax reform – passed along a strictly partisan line (after this SGI review period) – was opposed by a large majority of the public. Interpretations of this behavior emphasized the Republicans’ need to satisfy their electoral base (i.e. the most committed voters, most of whom continued to support President Trump) or the increased influence of very wealthy individual donors. Polling results in late 2017 point to a potential Democratic “wave” in the 2018 congressional elections. It is far from clear that current Republican positions reflect a viable electoral rationale.

Croatia

Score 4 Consultation of societal actors in Croatia has been governed by the 2009 Societal Consultation Codex. In practice, consultation has been limited, and the economic crisis has weakened the social dialog needed in policymaking. Under the Milanović government, the tripartite dialog between representatives of the government, employers and trade unions in the Economic and Social Council was marked by a lack of trust and respect. This has not changed under the two Plenković governments.

Mexico

Score 4 While originally perceived as a great communicator, President Peña Nieto’s approval rating fell below 20% in January 2017, while disapproval soared well above 80%. In this regard, the economic situation – especially the increase in gas prices in the aftermath of Nieto’s energy reform – rampant violence, the mishandling of several high-level corruption scandals and the societal crisis after the disappearance of 43 students in Guerrero have underlined the public’s discontent. In this critical situation, the government has taken a more hierarchical position regarding consultation with societal actors than its predecessors. The president’s approach tends to be to negotiate at the highest level of politics (i.e., with party leaders) and to rely on those involved to employ sufficient weight to enable reforms and other policy decisions to proceed. Thus, he undertakes intensive consultations with the leaders of Mexico’s political parties but social actors are less involved, perhaps because they are seen as potential opponents. This is in line with the Institutional Revolutionary Party’s tradition of corporatism, where participation has flowed mainly through corporatist party channels rather than through independent civil society organizations. Even though the government disputes the allegation that it used surveillance software to illegally spy on journalists and civil society actors, it has been unable to explain who else might have used the government-purchased software to keep tabs on critics of the current administration. The surveillance scandal further eroded trust between the administration and civil society.

Some participatory involvement occurs at the local and state level, in the form of experiments with participatory budgeting, roundtables with stakeholder consultation, and so on. While these types of consultation processes are not as strong as in other Latin American countries, they have become more common in Mexico.

Poland

Score 4

The Polish government is obliged by law to consult all parties affected by proposed legislation. In addition, there is a Council of Social Dialog whose members are appointed by the president. In October 2015, this council replaced the traditional Tripartite Commission which had ceased operations in June 2013 because of conflicts between trade unions and the government. Consultations both inside and outside the Council have been largely formal. Generally speaking, the government's clear majority in parliament has reduced the need for winning over social actors, and the government perceives many of them as enemies. Public consultation has been bypassed by introducing legislative initiatives through parliamentarians, since such initiatives do not require the regular consultation mechanisms, and therefore exclude experts and public. Moreover, the quick passage of major laws has reduced the time available for meaningful consultation. However, unlike the employers' associations and other trade unions, the trade union NSZZ Solidarność enjoys a special relationship with the government. Several of its representatives were given positions in the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Affairs, and it has supported reforms such as pension reform.

Portugal

Score 4

The government consults with some societal actors. For example, the Social and Economic Council (Conselho Económico e Social, CES) serves as a constitutional body for consultation and social concertation. Within the CES, there is a Standing Committee on Social Concertation (Comissão Permanente de Concertação Social, CPCS) that brings together the government, employer associations and trade unions. The CES and the CPCS continued to hold regular discussions during the period under review. This was made clear in the CES' plan of activities and in its press releases.

Citation:

See the CES Plan of Activities for the period under consideration at www.ces.pt/.../PLANO%DE%ACTIVIDADES%20CES%202015_re

Cristina Oliveira da Silva (2015), "Silva Peneda 'preocupado' com 'regular funcionamento' do CES," *Diário Económico*, 18/3/2015, available online at: http://economico.sapo.pt/noticias/silva-peneda-preocupado-com-regular-funcionamento-do-ces_214203.html

Turkey

Score 4

According to the Regulation Concerning the Procedures and Principles of Preparation of Legislation (Article 6), ministries may announce draft texts that are of public concern via the internet, press or printed publication before forwarding it to the Prime Minister's Office. Consequently, government decisions are made after the draft text has been publicly debated. In developing policies on housing, energy and education, among other policy areas, ministries may convene consultative bodies of major stakeholders, although not all sectors or organizations are typically included. Turkey's national development plans emphasize the importance of cooperation between NGOs and the public sector. The EU-funded public-civil society dialogue projects promote the participation of civil society in public decision-making. Government-society and parliament-society relations are not based on a systematic, ongoing and structured consultation mechanism. Political polarization during the review period increased the government's restrictions and biases on public access to policymaking processes and strengthened its preference to consult only with pro-government actors.

In general, governmental authorities consider this requirement to have a "slowing" effect on policymaking (e.g., on progressive projects such as urban renewal or the planning of hydroelectric power plants). Although it is required by the legal framework, societal consultation has largely been neglected or rendered ineffective.

Citation:

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Türkiye'de Hidroelektrik Sektöründe Paydaş Analizi, İstanbul: WWF-Türkiye, 2015, http://awsassets.wwftr.panda.org/downloads/wwf_paydas_analizi.pdf (accessed 27 October 2015).

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Gökçeççek Ayata and Ulaş Karan, *Sivil Toplum Aktif Katılım: Uluslararası Standartlar, Ulusal Mevzuattaki Engeller, Öneriler*, İstanbul: TÜSEV, 2015.

"Kamu - Sivil Toplum İşbirliği," <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/tr/kamu-sivil-toplum-isbirligi-37> (accessed 1 November 2017)

Greece

Score 3

In the period under review, social consultation on policy decisions was limited because Greece was governed on the grounds of the detailed policy measures and conditionalities included in the Third Economic Adjustment Program. The program, signed between Greece's lenders and the Greek government in July 2015, contained cuts to pension spending, and increased direct and indirect tax revenue. Such measures were at odds with what the Syriza and ANEL parties, the two partners of

the coalition government, had promised voters before forming a coalition government. To compensate voters for the associated income losses, the government handed out one-off welfare benefits to pensioners in December 2016 and to the poorer strata in November 2017, without consulting the country's creditors. On the other hand, the Syriza-ANEL government consulted with individual domestic and foreign businesses that the government hoped would invest in the mass media, real estate and tourism sectors.

Romania

Score 3

Romania has two tripartite bodies, the Social and Economic Council (Consiliul Economic și Social) and the National Tripartite Council for Social Dialog (Consiliul National Tripartit pentru Dialog Social, CNTDS). The Grindeanu and Tudose governments have used them mostly to provide information about planned initiatives, without a substantive process of involvement and cooperation. The Grindeanu and Tudose governments alike have perceived civil society as an enemy, not as a potential ally, and have made little use of the Ministry of Public Consultation and Civic Dialog originally established under the preceding Cioloș government.

Hungary

Score 2

The Orbán governments have largely refrained from consulting with independent societal actors. Orbán has argued that the government's strong parliamentary majority has vested it with sufficient legitimacy to carry out profound changes without consulting stakeholders. The second Orbán government abolished the former tripartite National Interest Reconciliation Council (OÉT) and replaced it in October 2011 with a new National Economic and Social Council (NGTT), having very limited competencies. Unlike its predecessor, this body meets very rarely and cannot make any decisions, thus primarily serving the goal of showing the government's commitment to some sort of social dialog. In response to the continuing mass demonstrations in the health and education sectors, the government has convened some meetings with selected stakeholders, but has firmly avoided to grant any competence to independent groups of experts or civil organizations. Instead, the government's main means of "listening" to society and citizens has been the so called national consultations, fake referendums held twice a year since 2010. Within this framework, the government sends out letters with misleading and manipulated "partisan" questions and the citizens are supposed to send back these questionnaires (free of charge) with their answers. Usually about 1 out of 8 million citizens do so, almost all of them supporting the views of the government. In March 2017 there was a national consultation on the EU ("Stop Brussels") that received only 920.000 answers. On 1 October 2017 the government launched a new national consultation

about the so called “Soros Plan,” which allegedly means supporting the invasion of Europe by Muslim migrants. Here, more than two million questionnaires were sent back. While the government justifies the national consultations as evidence that it is listening to the people, their real functions are the mobilization of Fidesz voters on a permanent basis and the preparation for the election campaign.

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